

What does that all mean?

- Adult Attachment

Below are some of the characteristics of each type of adult attachment style.

Try thinking about these during periods of conflict or indecision, it may help to be able to identify where your decisions are being driven by your attachment style.

Secure:

- Low on avoidance, low on anxiety.
- Comfortable with intimacy; not worried about rejection or preoccupied with the relationship.

“It is easy for me to get close to others, and I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I do not worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.”

Avoidant:

- High on avoidance, low on anxiety.
- Uncomfortable with closeness and primarily values independence and freedom; not worried about partner’s availability.

“I am uncomfortable being close to others. I find it difficult to trust and depend on others and prefer that others do not depend on me. It is very important that I feel independent and self-sufficient. My partner wants me to be more intimate than I am comfortable with.”

Anxious:

- Low on avoidance, high on anxiety.
- Crave closeness and intimacy, very insecure about the relationship.

“I want to be extremely emotionally close with others but they are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn’t love or value me and will abandon me. My need for closeness scares people away.”

Anxious and Avoidant:

- High on avoidance, high on anxiety.
- Uncomfortable with intimacy, and worried about partner’s commitment and love.

“I am uncomfortable getting close to others and find it difficult to trust and depend on them. I worry I will be hurt if I get close to my partner.”

Traits for each attachment style:

Autonomous (Secure)

- Comfortable in a warm, loving and emotionally close relationship.
- Depends on partner and allows partner to depend on them; is available for partner in times of need.
- Accepts partner's need for separateness without feeling rejected or threatened; can be close and independent (**dependent-independent**).
- Trusting, empathic, tolerant of differences, and forgiving.
- Communicates emotions and needs honestly and openly; in tune with partner's needs and responds appropriately; does not avoid conflict.
- Manages emotions well; not overly upset about relationship issues.
- Insight, resolution and forgiveness about past relationship issues and hurts.
- Sensitive, warm and caring parent; attuned to child's cues and needs; children are securely attached.

Dismissive (Avoidant)

- Emotionally distant and rejecting in an intimate relationship; keeps partner at arm's length; partner always wanting more closeness; **deactivates** attachment needs, feelings and behaviours.
- Equates intimacy with loss of independence; prefers autonomy to togetherness.
- Not able to depend on partner or allow partner to **lean on** them; independence is a priority.
- Communication is intellectual, not comfortable talking about emotions; avoids conflict, then explodes.
- Cool, controlled, stoic; compulsively self-sufficient; narrow emotional range; prefers to be alone.
- Good in a crisis; non-emotional, takes charge.
- Emotionally unavailable as parent; disengaged and detached; children are likely to have avoidant attachments.
- Sensitive, warm and caring parent; attuned to child's cues and needs; children are securely attached.

Preoccupied (Anxious)

- Insecure in intimate relationships; constantly worried about rejection and abandonment; preoccupied with relationship; **hyperactivates** attachment needs and behaviour.
- Needy; requires ongoing reassurance; want to **merge** with partner, which scares partner away.
- Ruminates about unresolved past issues from family-of-origin, which intrudes into present perceptions and relationships (fear, hurt, anger, rejection).
- Overly sensitive to partner's actions and moods; takes partner's behaviour too personally.
- Highly emotional; can be argumentative, combative, angry and controlling; poor personal boundaries.
- Communication is not collaborative; unaware of own responsibility in relationship issues; blames others.
- Unpredictable and moody; connects through conflict, **stirs the pot**.
- Not in tune with own children, who are likely to be anxiously attached.