

Relationship Patterns

(four attachment styles)

Secure Attachment



Caregiver behavior: consistently emotionally available, reads attachment cues correctly, and responds sensitively.

Avoidant Attachment



Caregiver behavior: emotionally unavailable, unresponsive, uncomfortable with emotions, dismisses their child's need for comfort or attention.

Anxious Attachment



Caregiver behavior: inconsistently emotionally available (sometimes loving, affectionate, and attuned and at other times insensitive, punitive, or unresponsive); has difficulty allowing their children to be independent.

Fearful/Disorganized Attachment



Caregiver behavior: frightening or unpredictable behaviors such as abuse or neglect; may have more serious life challenges, such as addiction, mental illness, trauma, or domestic violence.

Child strategy when distressed: Uses attachment relationships for comfort, security, and connection.

Child strategy when distressed: Suppresses distress and relies on self to sooth and meet needs.

Child strategy when distressed: Demandingness, anger, or emotional expression are used to ensure practical and emotional needs are met.

Child strategy when distressed: There is not a consistent strategy, so the child feels scared and confused and their needs are not met.

Adult behaviors: Secure adults are comfortable with intimacy and autonomy and enjoy close relationships.

Adult behaviors: Avoidant adults are independent, emotionally distant, isolated, and minimize need for connection.

Adult behaviors: Anxious adults are fearful of abandonment and often depend on others for self-worth. It is important for them to be close to others.

Adult behaviors: Fearful adults are fearful of intimacy. They can be unpredictable in relationships and have conflicting needs for intimacy and distance.

“By identifying our patterns, we can heal from past experiences and strengthen relationships with children, family and friends.”