



POLARIZED
RELATIONSHIPS

ATTACHMENT STYLES RELATIONSHIPS & SEX

Introduction

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby first described attachment theory, and later psychologist Mary Ainsworth expanded on his work. The relationship we have with our parents has a direct bearing on our attachment style. This means how we bonded with them, if we even did at all. There are four known attachment styles and each has varying characteristics. The four attachment styles are: Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, and Fearful Avoidant. To simplify these styles, you are either needy, avoidant, or a combination of the two. The remaining style isn't any of these because it's how two healthy people naturally bond together. I'm not a fan of even calling it an attachment style, as the word attachment sounds clingy, too emotionally dependent or like a blood-sucking leach feeding off your body. Although a secure bonding style is free from corrupted childhood conditioning, one may still feel some natural fear arising, but it won't be enough to sabotage the relationship.

You've either established a healthy and secure bond with one or both of your caregivers, or you haven't; a secure or an insecure attachment. Your bonding style will greatly affect your relationships, sexual viewpoints and its expression. With an insecure bonding style you're more likely to attach to another through a trauma bond. These relationships typically consist of extreme highs and lows. You know you're being manipulated but you can't seem to let go. You keep justifying your partner's behaviour and blaming yourself for it. You'll sacrifice your wants and needs to make them happy. You will feel worthless but addicted to them at the same time, all this while still hoping things will change and get better.

We all want to be loved and accepted and we will endure anything to get it. Even if that means sleeping around, staying in toxic relationships, joining gangs and cults or anything that brings us attention and a sense of belonging. The problem is when we do get the love and attention we crave, our limiting beliefs and low self-worth will cause us to look for

ways to sabotage it because we don't believe we deserve it. This is a result of trauma or an intense childhood experience. These are responsible for our unhealthy attachment styles. A scary experience will put you into a fight-or-flight reaction. You either stay to fight or leave to escape the danger. Everyone deals with trauma differently, it will cause you to feel anxiety or to avoid the situation altogether.

Let's take a look at the anatomy of bonding styles and how they affect us.

Imagine a cross and labeled each of the four styles in each quadrant, you will get a better idea of their relation to one another. In the upper left hand corner is **Secure**, and underneath that is **Avoidant**, both of these styles are low in feelings of anxiety. In the upper right-hand corner is **Anxious**, and underneath that is **Fearful Avoidant**. Both of these styles are high in anxiety.

In the upper left and right half, both **Secure** and **Anxious** are low in avoidance. These also support a positive model towards others. The bottom half of **Avoidant** and **Fearful Avoidant** is obviously very high in avoidance and denote a negative model of others. Let's look at each attachment style and how they can affect us both sexually and how we pair bond with one another.

Secure Attachment

Are you affectionate, and do you seek long term and committed relationships? Are you not into casual sex? Do you care about others' emotions and their reactions? Are you eager to satisfy your partner's desires and have them satisfy yours? Can you flirt and have relaxed conversations, can you laugh and have fun and so on? Are you able to touch and caress the opposite sex (or same sex, depending on your sexual orientation) in a way that demonstrates affection?

If so, you display low levels of both anxiety and avoidance and are less likely to worry about your role in a relationship. This is due to your healthy sense of worth and value, you feel good about yourself and your love life. You're more opted to seek long-term and committed relationships which are based on trust and mutual understanding. Emotional closeness doesn't scare you, and neither does trying new things to try in the bedroom. As a teenager, you were probably less likely to have one-night stands or casual sex. You didn't use sex to manipulate others or to inflate your ego. You are more into expressing and receiving affection from your lover and are likely more passionate than others.

When your childhood needs have been met you are able to bond in a secure way and you can express yourself and your emotions openly. You can trust and depend on others, as

confidently as you do on yourself. Secure attachments value and honour honesty, and emotional closeness. You and your partner can be apart for long periods without fear or mistrust or creating conflict.

Anxious Attachment

Do you fall in love easily even though they may not be the one? Do you use sex to get approval? Do you generally mistrust your partner? Do you worry about how others see you or how they judge you? Do you have an extreme desire for closeness, connection, and attachment with a partner? In contrast, do you use fantasy as a substitute for intimacy? Can you become obsessive and emotionally volatile, do you laugh or cry uncontrollably due to a strong fear of rejection? Does even the most insignificant sign of unavailability from your partner lead you to extreme jealousy and demonstrations of anger and distrust? Do you feel under appreciated or misunderstood by your lover? Do you feel their displays of affection aren't satisfying or enough for you? Do you still stay friends after a breakup? Do you hope it can still work out?

Your behaviour is driven by the attempt to make up for your perceived lack of love and sense of security. You'll constantly try to satisfy their needs to feel validated, appreciated, and desired. As a result, you become clingy, needy, and dependent, behaviours that will push your partners away, or cause undue conflict. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy, a paradox. You believe most people are naturally unavailable and uninterested in a LTR. Due to your constant state of worry and anxiety, you'll experience more bad sex. Your anxious behaviour leads you to jealousy and obsession. On the other hand, you can experience more extreme sexual attraction to others.

You generally have a negative perception of yourself, and thus have lower self-esteem. You perceive yourself as unattractive and often doubt yourself. In most cases, you'll use sex for manipulation, to provoke a partner's attentiveness, availability, and caregiving behaviour. Or, you to pursue closeness, reassurance, and approval. Typically, you'll have more intimate partners than other attachment types and are more prone to being unfaithful. Yet, you're more careful about safe sex and contraceptives. And as teenager, you've probably had sex earlier than most and consented to it in an attempt to prevent rejection and abandonment. Therefore, are likely to agree to do things they don't really want to do.

In any insecure bonding style, there are two extremes, clingy and unavailable (anxious or avoidant). One is sticky like glue and the other is like a non-stick pan. If you feel incomplete you'll search for another to fulfil you. In most cases, you will have low self-worth and a negative self-image. You will portray your partner as being better than you, put them on a pedestal, and believe they have a higher value than you. You will most

likely fawn over them and seek their approval. This creates a codependent dynamic with them. You will constantly question their devotion, and not being with them will cause you anxiety. You most likely suffer from a fear of abandonment, you're desperate for love.

Avoidant Attachment

Do you have a hard time falling in love? Is happily ever after bullshit? Is casual sex more your speed? Can you hook up with someone after a first date without really caring how they feel or what they have to say? Do you typically ask them to leave before breakfast, or at least before 5 AM? I get it, you've got stuff to do the next day, and you're busy. No texting ever again.

You have a deactivated attachment system and avoid closeness and intimacy. Emotions aren't your thing and you don't like their display, so you'll appear distant and cold. You don't care much for relationships as they don't do much for you. If it gets too intense you'll typically sabotage it; being an asshole or ghosting, etc. Short-term flings suit you much better. You'd rather lose yourself in a fantasy or watch porn to substitute it for intimacy, to just get your rocks off with unattached emotion-free sex. Maybe you abstain from sex altogether, as feelings from them can make you feel uncomfortable. You probably don't even have satisfying sex, and you may even avoid foreplay.

You may have had a low sex drive as a teenager, and may have had sex just to lose your virginity. You may have a big ego, and having sex may simply be for status, or to manipulate another. You'll most likely use sex as a stress reliever, or to relax because really, sex is no big deal. You don't use sex to express love, closeness and emotions with your partner. You most likely pursue short-term, non-committal sex and relationships. You may even use sex to keep emotionally distant from others.

This opposite end of the spectrum (anxious) is the avoidant. The strong and independent person who doesn't need a relationship, or a committed partner to feel complete. You are a lone wolf, self-sufficient with a perceived high self-regard. Avoidants don't want to feel reliant or dependent on others. They shun emotional closeness and suppress their feelings.

Fearful Avoidant

Are you always worrying about how you look on a date? Are you always guessing and never knowing if truly they like you or if they're talking to others behind your back? Even if they show interest in you—you'll still doubt they have interest in you. You probably can't ever relax. You're the type to seduce others and do whatever it takes to

please them while ignoring and dismissing your own needs. Placating or fawning to their every whim and desire. Pleasing their every wish while disregard your own needs. Hopefully, they will like you better that way.

You feel unworthy of love, pursue casual sex and are more likely to have a sex addiction. You'll tend to display high levels of both anxiety and avoidance and swing wildly between them. As a result, your behaviour can be unstable and unpredictable. One day you might show intense passion and love for someone, then all of a sudden shut down; even during sex because you fear intimacy. Like the anxious style, you have low confidence and don't feel worthy of love. You have a hard time trusting and relying on a lover, so you go for casual, no-strings emotionless sex. But since you need approval, you may become addicted to sex—it's your drug. You'll become passive and submissive in relationships.

You are a mixture of anxious and avoidant, you are at war with yourself. A partner can be the source of your desire and also your fear. This can cause unstable and ambiguous behaviour and fluctuating emotions. You want intimacy but at the same time, you find it hard to trust and depend on them.

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