



welcome to
**UNDERSTANDING
ATTACHMENT**

Attachment **THEORY**

Attachment: An emotional bonding with another who is perceived as a source of security

- An extension of psychoanalytic theory and a model for study of social psychology of close relationships and personality development.
- How does attachment play out later in life? Can damage and wounds be reversed?

Attachment **THEORY**

Attachment can be described as the emotional relationship you have with another person. It involves the exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure.

A person's attachment style is their unique way of relating to others in relationships. Attachment styles are developed in early childhood and stem from our relationship with our parents (or primary caregivers).

However, since experience plays such a key role in attachment styles, experiences in adolescence and adulthood can drastically alter attachment styles. The attachment style you have generally governs your adult behavior.

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Attachment **THEORY**

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- Parenting styles have an impact on early childhood development
 - Adult problems directly related to the early developmental years includes inability to trust, inability to freely accept and give love, issues with recognizing and expressing feelings, problems concerning a lack of meaning or purpose in life
 - Infant attachment relationships can be broadly classified as secure or insecure
 - Did you develop a sense of being loved during infancy?
 - This feeling, if developed, is the best safeguard against fear, insecurity, and inadequacy

Attachment STYLES

ANXIOUS

AVOIDANT

SECURE

There are 3 main categories for attachment styles

Avoidant- Characterized as being afraid of intimacy, experiencing emotional highs and lows during relationships, along with much jealousy.

Anxious/Ambivalent- View love in an obsessive way, with strong need for constant reciprocation and validation, along with emotional highs and lows, and feelings of jealousy and strong sexual attraction.

Secure- Describe their romantic relationships as friendly, trusting, and happy. They accept their partners regardless of faults. They tend to have long and fulfilling relationships.

Attachment STYLES

DISORGANIZED

Disorganized Attachment: the caregivers who were supposed to keep you safe from harm were the very people inflicting the harm

-causes incredible difficulty in establishing and sustaining close intimate relationships in adulthood

-can also be the result of childhood emotional neglect (CEN) or inconsistency in caregiver presence/involvement and perceived interest in child's inner world

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Attachment **SECURE**

- Children who develop secure attachments to their caregivers are generally visibly upset when the caregiver leaves and happy when they return. If the child is frightened, they will seek the comfort of the caregiver. Children who are securely attached to their caregiver generally demonstrate positive behavior toward them, both when the caregiver returns and when the caregiver initiates contact.
- Caregivers who have developed a secure attachment with children tend to play with them more and respond more quickly to the child's need than those who have ambivalent or avoidant attachments.

Attachment **SECURE**

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- Children with secure attachments grow into adults that have healthy and lasting relationships and well as good self-esteem, share their feelings, and seek out social support. Securely attached adults are clear on boundaries, don't leave you questioning where you stand in dating and are generally not conflict avoidant. They don't fear abandonment or engulfment.

Attachment **ANXIOUS**

- Children who develop an anxious/ambivalent attachment style generally do so because they did not know if they were going to be cared for consistently so they developed a fear of or even incapability of being alone. Children with anxious or ambivalent attachment are often distressed when separated from the caregiver but are not comforted by their return.
- Occasionally this can lead to rejecting the caregiver by refusing comfort and even outright aggression toward them (or your partner, as an adult). As older children or teens, they are often described as clingy, over-dependent, or 'dramatic'; there is a high need to be close to family. They have trouble self-soothing when they feel anxious - or away from trusted support.

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Attachment **ANXIOUS**

- As adults, those with anxious attachments need constant reassurance that they are loved, worthy, and good enough. They have a high need for intimacy and closeness and are preoccupied with their relationships. Their deepest fear is being abandoned and therefore they become desperate, clingy, and highly emotional upon any perception (real or imagined) of their partner leaving them.

Attachment **AVOIDANT**

- Children who develop an avoidant attachment style generally do so because they did not know if they were going to be cared for, so they developed the belief they could not rely on others. They avoid interacting or getting too close to parents or any type of caregiver (or partner later in adulthood). This avoidance can increase after a period of closeness. These children don't seek out the comfort of their caregiver and generally show no preference between a stranger and a caregiver. They don't necessarily reject attention from caregivers but they do not seek it out either.

Attachment **AVOIDANT**

- As adults, those with avoidant attachments may have trouble being intimate, avoid investing emotionally and be unwilling to share their thoughts and feelings. Their deepest fear is losing their independence and therefore they will pull away when they feel they, or you as their partner, are getting too close.

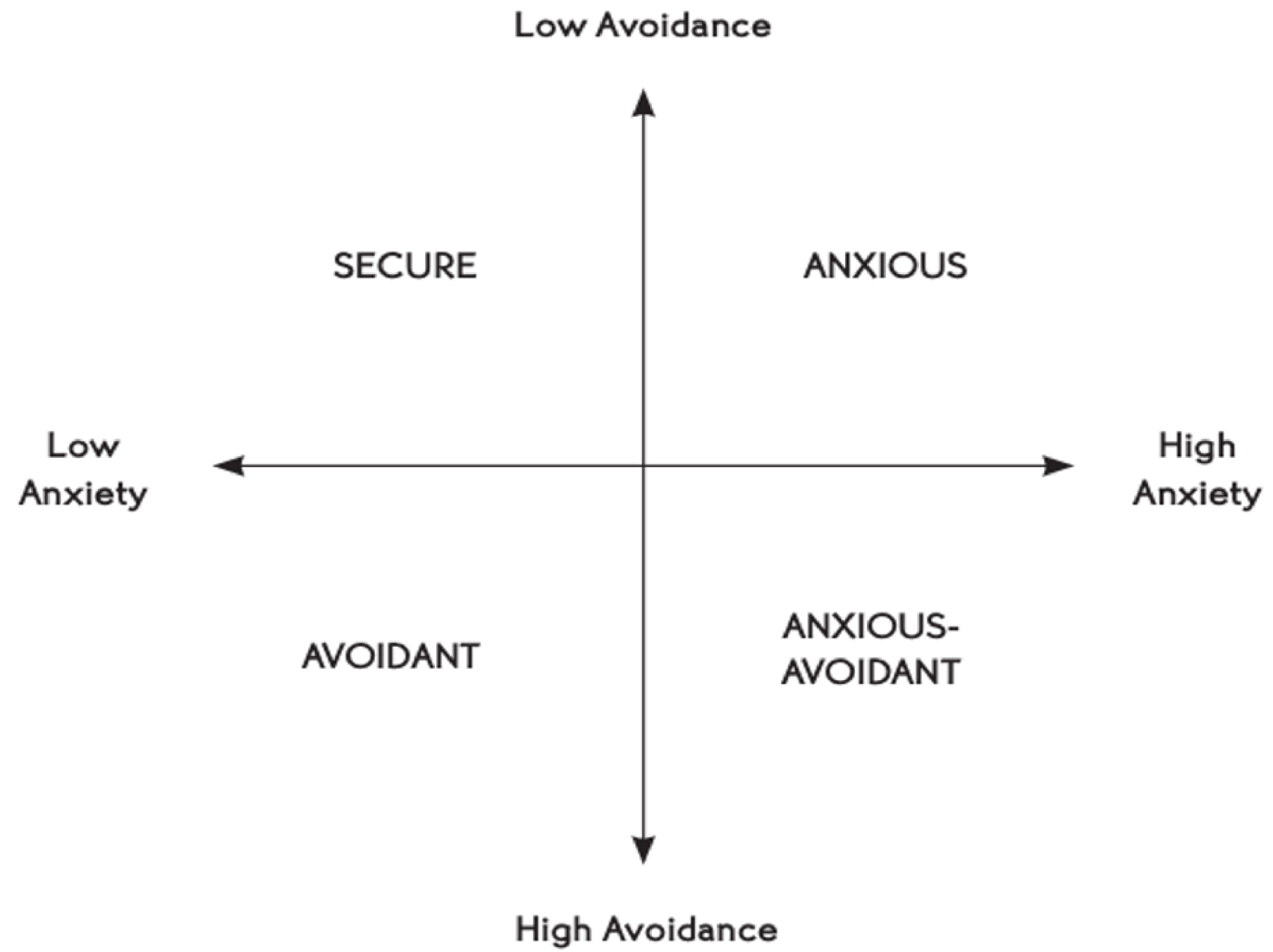
Attachment **DISORGANIZED**

- Children with disorganized attachments show characteristics of both avoidance and resistance. Disorganized attachment develops when a child experiences abuse, trauma, or chaos in the home. As a result, they learn to fear their caregivers and have no "secure base" to turn to for consistent support, emotional safety, and comfort.
- When the parent acts as a figure of both comfort and fear/trauma, the child isn't sure which to expect and therefore acts in a manner that reflects that confusion. They may seem confused or dazed when with their caregiver because they haven't developed one strong attachment style from the aforementioned styles.

Attachment **DISORGANIZED**

- In adulthood, people with this attachment style are extremely inconsistent in their behavior and have a hard time trusting others. Such individuals could also suffer from other mental health issues, such as substance abuse, depression, borderline personality disorder. This style can be changed with proper treatment, although the process might be challenging depending on the level of childhood trauma and at what age the treatment starts.

THE TWO ATTACHMENT DIMENSIONS



(Based on Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's Two Attachment Dimension Scale)



