

What Is My Attachment Pattern, and With Whom?

Read the article first. This self-reflection accompanies *What Are the Four Attachment Styles? Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, and Disorganized* at ThoughtsFromATherapist.com, which explains attachment as biological and psychological at once and follows each pattern through the four stages of an emotional reaction. Search “four attachment styles” on the site to find it.

Attachment is most useful as a map of dispositions rather than a classification of people. The same person may feel secure in one relationship, anxious in another, and avoidant in a third, and may lean differently when calm than under stress. This sheet has no score, no total, and no type. It maps where we lean, with whom, and how far we drift when something goes wrong. It is a reflection tool, not a validated measure.

THE LINES

Two directions of drift

Each line has a middle and two ends. The middle is the direct, connected version. One end leans toward self-reliance: keeping the need private, carrying it alone. The other leans toward pursuit: reaching through protest, needing repeated proof. Both ends carry fear about whether help will work. Neither end is a worse place to be.

THE FIVE LINES

Reaching to returning

Reaching: what we do when we need help. **Expecting:** what we assume help will bring. **Receiving help:** how an offer lands in the body. **Closeness:** how near we can be and remain ourselves. **Returning:** how we settle afterward, and with whom.

THE MARKS

C for calm, S for stress

For each relationship, we mark each line twice: a C where we usually sit on an ordinary day, and an S where we drift when we are hurt, frightened, or something goes wrong. The distance between the two marks is often the most useful information on the page.

READING IT

By degree and context

We read across relationships (where does my lean change, and with whom?) and down the stress marks (where do I drift, and in which direction?). Nothing here sits at the poles. Moving between pursuit and withdrawal inside one relationship is common, and both can be attempts to manage the same uncertainty.

Where am I closest to the middle, and with whom?

Where do I drift under stress, and toward which end?

A WORKED EXAMPLE: ONE RELATIONSHIP, TWO MARKS

RELATIONSHIP

A partner, at a bar, while an attractive man talks with them.

CALM (C)

Near the middle on reaching. On an ordinary night, asking for reassurance is easy.

STRESS (S)

Toward pursuit. The direct reach would be: “I am feeling insecure. Could I have some reassurance?” What comes out is protest: “Why don't you just go home with him?”

RECEIVING

Toward pursuit as well. Reassurance helps for an hour and then needs to be given again.

WHAT IT SHOWS

The need is real and the lean is contextual. The protest is an intensified reach: trying to get the other person to disprove the fear.

Mapping two relationships

On each line, mark a C where I usually sit when calm and an S where I drift under stress.

THE FIRST RELATIONSHIP

Who is it? (a partner, a parent, a sibling, a close friend, someone at work)

	TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE	THE MIDDLE	TOWARD PURSUIT
Reaching	I keep it private and say I am fine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I reach through protest or accusation
Expecting	Nobody can help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Help could go well or poorly, no way to know
Receiving help	Help lands as burden or irritation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Relief, with fear they will leave
Closeness	Too separate to help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Too fused to help
Returning	I settle alone, or not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I settle only with repeated proof

Filling this in on a screen: click a dot and type the letter for the mark.

WHAT I NOTICE WITH THIS PERSON

THE SECOND RELATIONSHIP

Who is it?

	TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE	THE MIDDLE	TOWARD PURSUIT
Reaching	I keep it private and say I am fine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I reach through protest or accusation
Expecting	Nobody can help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Help could go well or poorly, no way to know
Receiving help	Help lands as burden or irritation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Relief, with fear they will leave
Closeness	Too separate to help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Too fused to help
Returning	I settle alone, or not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I settle only with repeated proof

WHAT I NOTICE WITH THIS PERSON

Mapping two more

Choose relationships that feel different from the first two. Contrast shows the pattern.

THE THIRD RELATIONSHIP

Who is it?

	TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE	THE MIDDLE	TOWARD PURSUIT
Reaching	I keep it private and say I am fine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I reach through protest or accusation
Expecting	Nobody can help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Help could go well or poorly, no way to know
Receiving help	Help lands as burden or irritation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Relief, with fear they will leave
Closeness	Too separate to help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Too fused to help
Returning	I settle alone, or not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I settle only with repeated proof

WHAT I NOTICE WITH THIS PERSON

THE FOURTH RELATIONSHIP

Who is it?

	TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE	THE MIDDLE	TOWARD PURSUIT
Reaching	I keep it private and say I am fine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I reach through protest or accusation
Expecting	Nobody can help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Help could go well or poorly, no way to know
Receiving help	Help lands as burden or irritation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Relief, with fear they will leave
Closeness	Too separate to help ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		Too fused to help
Returning	I settle alone, or not at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐		I settle only with repeated proof

WHAT I NOTICE WITH THIS PERSON

Reading the map

A disposition is what a system leans toward in a given context, not what it is forced to do.

ACROSS RELATIONSHIPS

Where does my lean change, and with whom? What is different about the people I sit closest to the middle with?

DOWN THE STRESS MARKS

Where is the distance between C and S largest? Do I drift in one direction, or toward pursuit with one person and self-reliance with another?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ARTICLE

WHEN MY SYSTEM COULD USE HELP, WHEN DO I LEAN TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE?

WHEN THE OTHER PERSON'S AVAILABILITY BECOMES AMBIGUOUS, DO I ASK DIRECTLY, ATTACK BEFORE I CAN BE ABANDONED, OR LEAVE BEFORE MY NEED BECOMES VISIBLE?

WHEN DO I FEEL SECURE ENOUGH TO OPEN MY SYSTEM AND RECEIVE WHAT ANOTHER PERSON OFFERS?

TRACED UPSTREAM

Deconstruction traces the protective behavior back to the need beneath it. Finish the sentence for one relationship.

UNDERNEATH THE PROTEST OR THE DISTANCE, WHAT I NEED IS...

The pattern belongs to us, and it is not the whole of us. Security can be injured, and insecurity can be revised. What looks like a fixed style is often an older entry that stays available under stress while a newer one becomes possible.