

Your relationship style:

Few people have not been involved in intimate relationships that have not caused them to feel inadequate, helpless, or weak. Why do people who are relatively intelligent, mature, or 'together' become derailed, dependent, or so despondent when in intimate relationship? Why do people become so dependent, self-doubting, and ineffective when in everyday life we seem to be capable and confident? Why do you, the reader, at times feel so ineffective and powerless in dealing with your intimate partner though you function so well in other areas of life.

There are interesting answers to this question. Considerable research has shown that everybody has a particular attachment style. We become attached to romantic partners in a style that mirrors the attachment style we developed as toddlers. There are three distinct ways that babies and toddlers form attachments with caregivers: SECURE attachment, ANXIOUS Attachment, and AVOIDANT Attachment. These styles are repeated in adulthood and reveal themselves in romantic relationships.

SECURE people feel comfortable with intimacy and are usually warm and loving. If you are a SECURE type, you are able to say, "I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I do not often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me".

ANXIOUS people are always looking for reassurance and worry about their partner's ability to love them. If your attachment style is anxious, you will tend to say, "I find that others are reluctant to get close as I would like. I often worry that my partner does not really love me or will not want to stay with me". I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire has even scared people away.

AVOIDANT people feel that intimacy compromises their independence so they always want to pull away. If this is your predominant style, you will say, "I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when someone anyone gets too close, and often romantic partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being".

Every person falls into one of these categories. Understanding these styles is an easy and reliable way to understand and predict people's behaviour in any romantic situation. Most men and women are only as needy as their unmet needs. When their emotional needs are met, they usually turn their attention outward. In other words, if your needs for dependence or freedom are met in your relationship you will feel secure and safe and then be able to confidently turn outward toward the world or even your children.

When you get involved with someone, the two of you become one psychological unit. Amazingly, research shows that your partner has the ability to control and regulate even your blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and hormonal levels.

Dependence in marriage is essential and necessary – it is not a choice. To be happy does not mean that we need to be joined at the hip or give up our independence. Our independence is actually fostered by how well our relationship provides us with the dependence we need. The simple paradoxical truth is this: *If you want to have independence in a relationship, find the right person to depend on!* Men, who are stereotyped as needing independence, are paradoxically often dependent on women to give it to them. It is a strange dynamic but we become emotionally dependent on someone else to foster our

independence! If this were not true there would be no fights in a marriage about this issue!

How you attach to someone is an integral part of your entire life – from the cradle to the grave. You can improve your relationship by understanding and being honest about your style. You might like to think you are secure, but you may be far more avoidant or anxious than you care to admit. For example, if you complain and give-out to your partner a lot you might think that is because you are secure but it may be because you are really pushing him away or else because you are constantly anxious within yourself. Also, try to identify your partner's style.

Most of us like to think of ourselves as secure and then easily blame our partners for causing us upset. However, our upset may have its origins in our own unmet needs that come from our life-long anxiety or avoidance mechanisms. When we are anxious, we always 'want' more security, when we are avoidant we are always 'wanting' more space. When we are secure we don't worry too much about these things. We know that our relationship is secure and safe enough for us. No relationship is perfect. We just need enough.

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