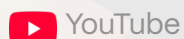


Understanding the 9 Attachment Styles

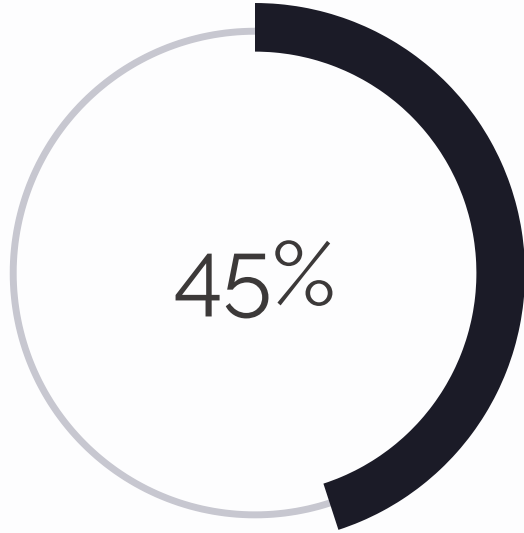
Most people think they want deep connection until reality hits—then old patterns emerge. We chase, pull back, shut down. These behaviors are encapsulated in our attachment style, a framework that reveals how we navigate intimacy and trust in relationships.



Each Myers-Briggs Type Has an Attachment Style

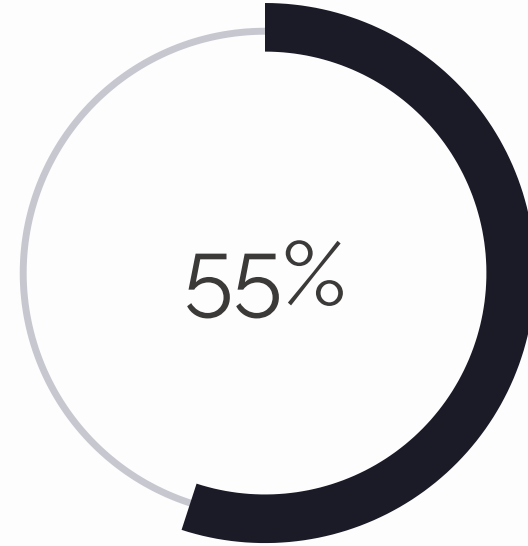
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The Shocking Statistics



Have Attachment Issues

Observable, reportable attachment style problems in the population.



Clustered at Center

Relatively secure attachment, though not perfectly so.

"Maybe finding somebody who has a secure attachment style is more important than finding somebody who is the right personality type for me."

Dr. Nardi suggests the hierarchy for relationships should be: (1) Secure attachment, (2) Good biochemistry, (3) Shared goals and values, (4) Personality type compatibility.

The Foundation: Four Classic Styles

Secure

Positive self-image and view of others. Accepts and gives support when needed. Has confidence about relationships and a good track record with them.

Avoidant

Distant and unemotional. Avoids closeness or intimacy. Tends to intellectualize. "Don't get too close to me. I'm not gonna share any of my emotions."

Anxious

Clingy and highly emotional. Constantly seeking reassurance. Has fantasy or dream life about relationships. Fears abandonment and comes on strong.

Fearful/Disorganized

Push and pull pattern. Craves love but fears being hurt. Falls hard then retreats. Hot and cold behavior leaves partners confused about what's happening.

The Hidden Defense Mechanisms

Each attachment style has built-in defenses that prevent people from seeing their own patterns. As Dr. Nardi explains, "Each of the attachment styles has a defense mechanism to help the person not see what their style is."

Avoidant Defense

Dismissive of the theory itself. "This is not a validated theory" or "That's not how I've actually behaved." They find intellectual reasons to dismiss feedback.

Anxious Awareness

Usually very aware they're anxious but unsure how to stop. They recognize the pattern but can't seem to relax about relationships despite wanting to.

Core Wounds

Underneath attachment styles are core wounds and unmet needs. These safeguards exist to prevent the person from being injured again in vulnerable ways.

Expanding the Model: The 3x3 Matrix

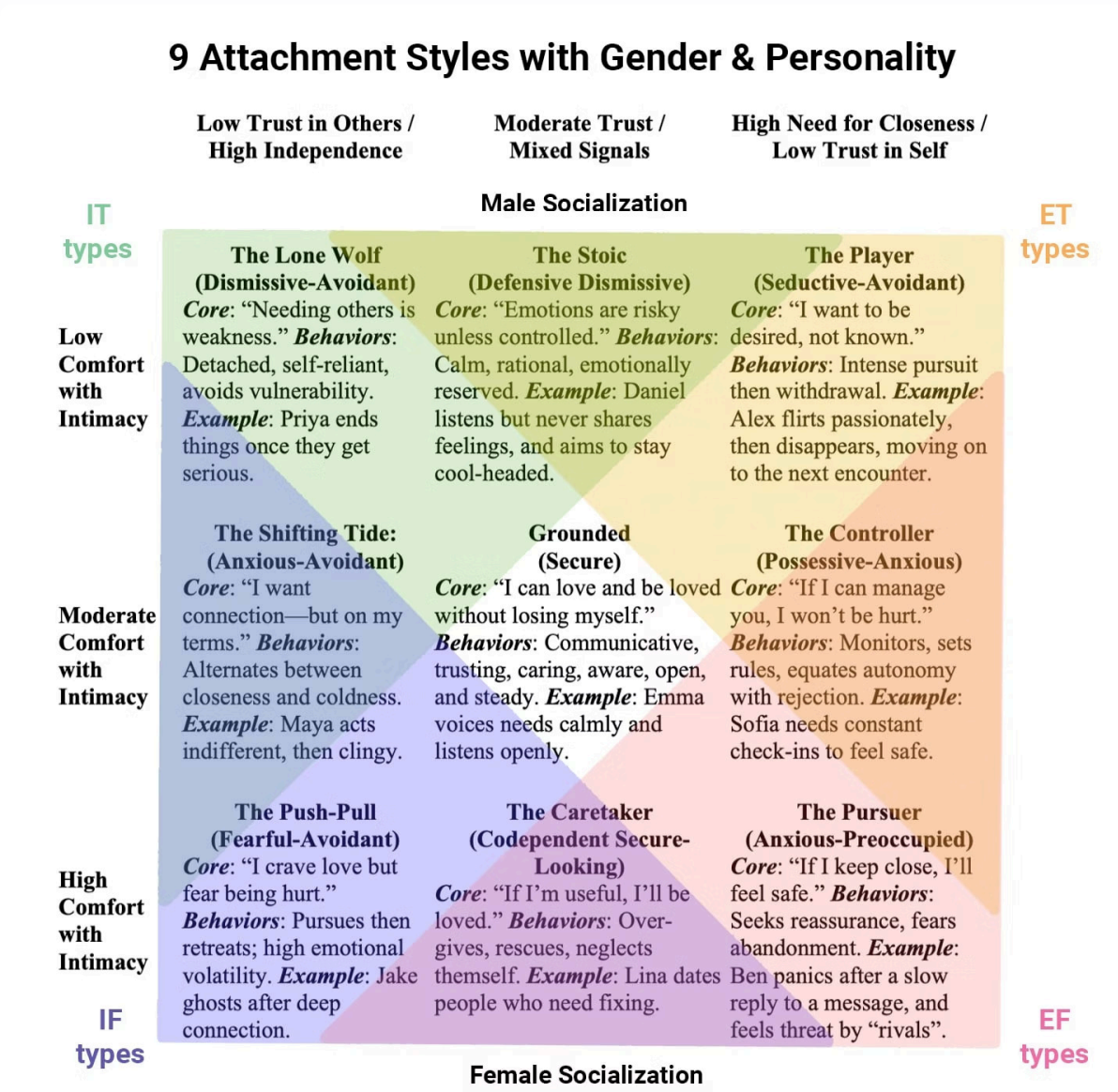
Dr. Nardi expanded the traditional four styles into nine by stretching the model to three-by-three. This captures all the sub-styles and nuances found in the literature, with secure at the center.

Vertical Axis: Intimacy

Comfort with sharing what's going on internally and personally. Being vulnerable or open. Ranges from low to moderate to high comfort levels.

Horizontal Axis: Trust

Low trust means high independence —"I need to do everything myself."
High trust enables closeness and interdependence. Moderate trust falls between these extremes.



Style #1: The Lone Wolf (Dismissive Avoidant)

Core Pattern

Low comfort with intimacy, high independence. Trusts themselves but not others. "Needing other people is a weakness."

Behaviors

Detached, self-reliant, avoids vulnerability. Willing to share up to a point, then shuts down when feeling vulnerable. The more partners try to pull them closer, the more they withdraw.

Outcome

"I know how to live on my own. I don't actually need to be close to people. Why not just cancel the relationship and go back to work?"

Style #2: The Pursuer (Anxious Preoccupied)



High Need for Closeness

Comfortable with intimacy and sharing. Low trust in themselves, high trust in others. Seeks constant reassurance.



Fear of Abandonment

Already thinking about naming children by week two. Wedded to future ideas of what will happen. "Oh no, they haven't texted me back. What's going on?"



Would Rather Have

A bad relationship than no relationship at all. Constantly preoccupied with relationship thoughts and seeking emotional connection.

Style #3: The Player (Seductive Avoidant)

High need for closeness and social interaction, but problems with intimacy. Loves being desired and the romantic aspects, but doesn't want to actually be known.



1

The Pursuit

Goes out to bars, meets people, very flirty and dramatic. Loves the sexual and fun romantic aspects of relationships.

2

The Retreat

When it becomes serious, they disappear. They're performing rather than showing vulnerable parts of themselves. Women can be players too.

Style #4: The Push-Pull (Fearful Avoidant)

"They crave love, they wanna be in relationship, they know how to share. But they're also deeply fearful of being hurt or hurting the other person. So they're gonna pursue and then they're gonna retreat."

Deep Connection

Period of genuine intimacy. Really showing themselves.
Emotional and sometimes dramatic.

The Pattern

Passive aggressive behaviors. The other person can't figure out what's going on. "It's very complicated and there's just a lot going on inside."

1

2

3

The Retreat

"I need to walk this back for my own emotional and mental safety." Sometimes cold, creating disorganized confusion.

Style #5: The Stoic

Between the lone wolf and the player sits the stoic. Often in relationships, even married for years, but very reserved about emotions. "I put a lot of my emotions in a box. I regulate them. They need to be controlled."

Unlike the lone wolf, they're able to be in a relationship and need to have one. They're not doing it all themselves, but they maintain emotional distance and rationality.

Key Traits

- Reserved and rational
- Emotions are controlled
- Can maintain long-term relationships
- Moderate trust and intimacy

Style #6: The Controller (Possessive)

📄 **Dr. Nardi's Observation:** "I am so shocked that this often is not in the literature. Controlling people are the ones I dislike the most. And yet mysteriously they're not in the literature."

Core Belief

"If I can manage you, then I won't be hurt." Sets rules, monitors constantly, wants phone passcodes and location tracking.

Emotional Pattern

Anxiety is suppressed. When it emerges, it comes out as anger rather than vulnerability or paranoia.

Relationship Dynamic

Wants shared bank accounts not to share everything, but to control. Possessiveness is the tool to manage what's happening.

Style #7: The Caretaker (Codependent)

Between the push-pull and the pursuer lies the caretaker. "As long as I'm taking care of you, then you need me." From the outside it looks secure, but it's built on making themselves indispensable.



Over-Giving

Rescuing, neglecting themselves, putting everyone first—children, parents, siblings, coworkers, spouse. Everything comes before themselves.

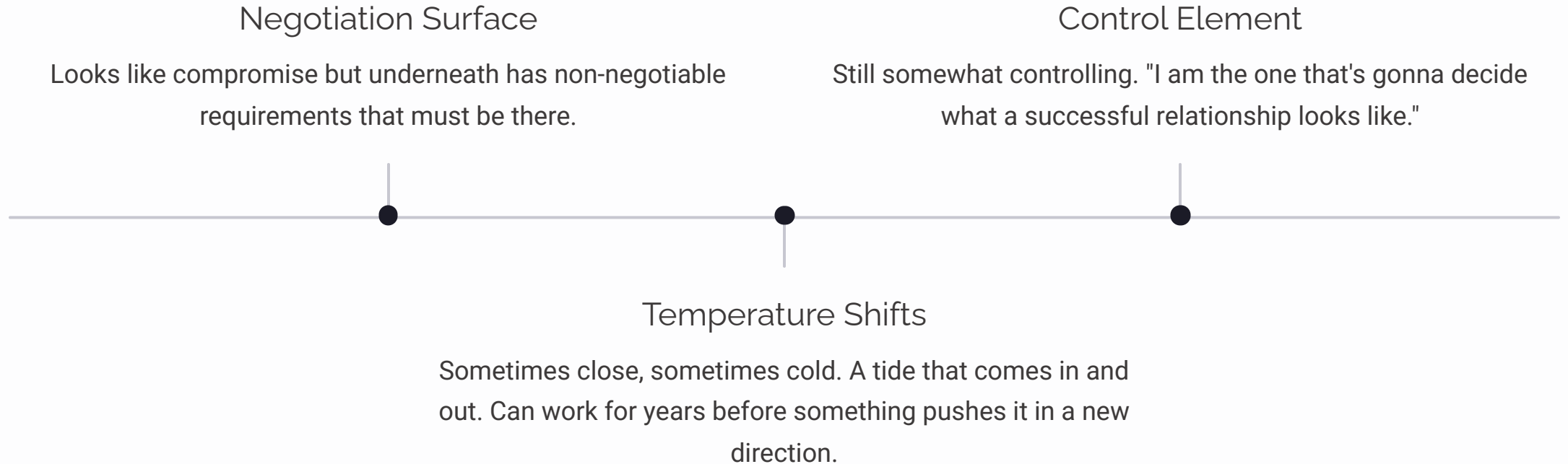


The Cost

This approach burns the person out. They make themselves so useful that the other person won't want to leave.

Style #8: Shifting Tides (Anxious Avoidant)

Between the lone wolf and push-pull. Wants connection but needs it at least 50% on their terms—and that's a minimum. "We can be in relationship, but you need to do this and this and this."



Style #9: Grounded/Secure (Center)

Balanced Trust

Moderate trust in self and others. Not too independent, not too dependent.



Comfortable Intimacy

Moderate comfort with vulnerability and sharing. Can be open without losing boundaries.



Relationship Confidence

Has confidence about relationships and can point to healthy, positive relationships in their history.

Positive Self-Image

Generally positive view of self and others. Accepts support when needed, gives support when needed.

Gender Socialization and Attachment

Male Socialization

Historically taught to be stoic, independent, not show vulnerability. "Suck it up, keep your emotions to yourself." Boys can be players until marriage, then settle into stoicism. Lone wolf is perfectly acceptable behavior.

Female Socialization

Taught to be caretakers from childhood. Expected to think carefully about good matches and do what's needed. Caretaking starts with younger siblings, extends to elderly parents, everyone.

Feeling Males

Face double socialization pressure - naturally inclined toward emotional connection but taught to suppress vulnerability. May develop anxious attachment patterns or become caretakers to express care in "acceptable" ways. Often struggle with being seen as "too sensitive" while craving emotional intimacy.

Thinking Females

Navigate expectations to be nurturing while having natural preference for logic over emotion. May develop avoidant patterns to protect against being seen as "cold" or develop controller tendencies to maintain relationships through competence rather than emotional availability. Often feel pressure to soften their direct communication style.

❏ **Important Note:** "Even though the official word is men should share emotions, in practice the moment a *dude* exposes a big vulnerability, that might actually be a turnoff. It's not fair, but it happens."

Personality Type Influences

IT Types (Introverts + Thinking)

Natural home base: Lone Wolf. "It is so easy for IT types to just be lone wolves. That is the natural operating state." Can stretch to Stoic or Shifting Tides.

IF Types (Introverts + Feeling)

Natural home base: Push-Pull. Interior world meets feeling preference—everything is about the feeling world. Can move to Caretaker or Shifting Tides.

ET Types (Extroverts + Thinking)

Natural home base: The Player. Love shared activities but avoid deep intimacy. Can move to Stoic or Controller. Often labeled secure even when they're not.

EF Types (Extroverts + Feeling)

Natural home base: The Pursuer. Want intimacy with closeness. Low self-trust creates anxiety. Lying awake at 3am thinking about the right thing to say.

What You're Willing to Give Up

Pursuer

Would rather have a bad relationship than no relationship at all. Cannot tolerate being alone.

Lone Wolf/Stoic

Would rather have no relationship than a bad one. Comfortable staying home and being in their own skin.

Player

Finds it difficult to give up socializing and social activity. Needs shared activities even without deep intimacy.

Push-Pull

Wants to be known through mind-reading. "I don't wanna have to tell you because I might say it in a way that will hurt you."

Controller

Would rather control the relationship than risk being hurt or abandoned. Willing to give up partner's autonomy for security.

Caretaker

Would rather be needed than truly known. Willing to give up authentic connection for the safety of being indispensable.

Shifting Tides

Would rather have connection on their terms than compromise. Willing to give up flexibility for control over relationship dynamics.

Seductive Avoidant

Would rather be desired than truly intimate. Willing to give up deep emotional connection for the thrill of being wanted.

Secure

Willing to give up some independence for interdependence, and some control for trust. Balanced approach to relationship trade-offs.

The Core Wounds Beneath

Attachment styles are elaborate defense systems protecting against core wounds from formative years. These patterns develop from consistent treatment during childhood and adolescence.

01

Critical Parents

Constant feedback that you're not worthy as a daughter or son. Never living up to standards creates deep insecurity.

02

Smothering Control

Parents nosing into business, going through drawers, interrogating, listening to phone calls. Creates desperate need for space and distrust.

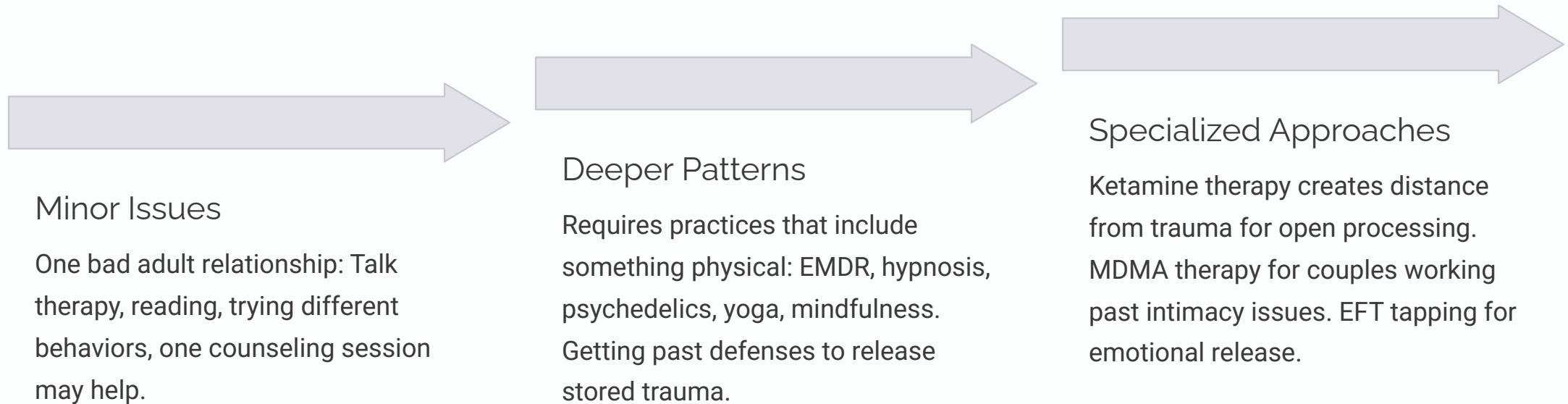
03

Physical/Emotional Abuse

Learning it's dangerous to do or say the wrong thing. Trauma gets stored in the body, leading to emotional shutdown.

📄 "All of this stuff is built up—the body keeps the score. The person's just like, I'm gonna shut that out and be stoic, be a player, be controlling. That will keep me safe from my own emotions."

Pathways to Healing



Dr. Nardi emphasizes: "It really needs to be something that is releasing in nature. Not just talk therapy, but something that releases the fear and tension stored in the body."

Moving Forward With Awareness



Triangulate Your Position

Consider your personal experiences, gender socialization, and personality type home base. Ask trusted others how they experience you in relationships.



Map Your Relationship History

Identify patterns from family, friends, and romantic relationships. What did you learn? What do you wish had been better?



Seek Professional Support

For deeper issues, work with therapists trained in attachment. Consider body-based practices that release stored trauma, not just talk therapy.

"There is a secure version of all of our types. There isn't some one magical perfect person that's type-free. Our natural tendencies will always be there—attachment styles are when it becomes a pattern that interferes with relationships."



Share Your Insights

Your journey to understanding attachment styles is unique. We invite you to contribute to a growing community dedicated to self-awareness and healing. Share your anonymous insights and experiences to help others on their path.

[Share Your Anonymous Feedback](#)