

# THE FOUR ATTACHMENT STYLES: AN OVERVIEW

Prepared by Phil Herndon, LPC-MHSP, NCC

John Bowlby, a British psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, developed the Attachment Theory, which highlights the crucial role early relationships play in shaping how individuals connect with others throughout their lives. Attachment is described as follows: *"A unique relationship between an infant and their caregiver that forms the foundation for further healthy development."*

## ATTACHMENT STYLES OVERVIEW

There are four primary attachment styles. One is healthy, and the other three are categorized as impaired, reflecting specific relational patterns.

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ATTACHMENT STYLE	KEY CHARACTERISTICS	IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS	CORE MESSAGE
SECURE	Comfortable with closeness, independence, and trust.	Stable, healthy relationships.	<i>"I'm right here, and you're right there."</i>
ANXIOUS	Craves closeness, fears abandonment, emotional highs/lows.	Over-dependent, struggles with trust.	<i>"Will you really be there for me?"</i>
AVOIDANT	Values independence, struggles with emotions.	Emotionally distant, resists intimacy.	<i>"I can't find you because I can't find me."</i>
DISORGANIZED	Conflicted about closeness, often due to trauma.	Hot and cold behavior, relationship anxiety.	<i>"Go away/don't leave me!"</i>



# 1. SECURE ATTACHMENT

## CHARACTERISTICS:

- COMFORTABLE WITH EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS AND INDEPENDENCE.
- TRUSTS OTHERS AND HAS A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE.
- EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATES NEEDS AND EMOTIONS.
- HANDLES CONFLICT HEALTHILY.

## DEVELOPMENTAL ORIGIN:

- DEVELOPED WHEN CAREGIVERS ARE CONSISTENTLY RESPONSIVE AND EMOTIONALLY AVAILABLE.

## IMPACT IN RELATIONSHIPS:

- FORMS STABLE, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.
- COMFORTABLE WITH INTIMACY AND BALANCING AUTONOMY AND CONNECTION.

## SPIRITUAL LIFE CHARACTERISTICS:

- FEELS SECURE IN GOD'S LOVE AND PRESENCE.
- LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN CONSISTENT SPIRITUAL PRACTICES.

## CORE MESSAGE:

- "I'M RIGHT HERE, AND YOU'RE RIGHT THERE."



## 2. ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT

### CHARACTERISTICS:

- CRAVES CLOSENESS BUT FEARS ABANDONMENT.
- OVERLY SENSITIVE TO RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS.
- SEEKS CONSTANT REASSURANCE AND STRUGGLES WITH SELF-WORTH.
- EXPERIENCES EMOTIONAL HIGHS AND LOWS.

### DEVELOPMENTAL ORIGIN:

- CAREGIVERS WERE INCONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE—SOMETIMES ATTENTIVE, SOMETIMES NEGLECTFUL.

### IMPACT IN RELATIONSHIPS:

- OVER-DEPENDENCE ON PARTNERS FOR VALIDATION.
- MAY EXPERIENCE JEALOUSY, CLINGINESS, AND INSECURITY.
- STRUGGLES TO TRUST THAT LOVE IS STABLE.

### SPIRITUAL LIFE CHARACTERISTICS:

- FEARS ABANDONMENT BY GOD AND STRUGGLES TO FEEL HIS LOVE.
- UNCERTAINTY IN SALVATION AND SELF-WORTH.

### CORE MESSAGE:

- "WILL YOU REALLY BE THERE FOR ME?"



## 2. AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

### CHARACTERISTICS:

- VALUES INDEPENDENCE AND AVOIDS DEEP RELATIONSHIPS.
- STRUGGLES TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS OR RELY ON OTHERS.
- APPEARS EMOTIONALLY DISTANT OR DISENGAGED.
- SUPPRESSES NEEDS TO MAINTAIN CONTROL.

### DEVELOPMENTAL ORIGIN:

- CAREGIVERS WERE EMOTIONALLY UNAVAILABLE OR DISCOURAGED EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION.

### IMPACT IN RELATIONSHIPS:

- STRUGGLES WITH EMOTIONAL CONNECTION, ESPECIALLY IN DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS (E.G., MARRIAGE).
- MAY RESIST COMMITMENT OR VULNERABILITY.
- TENDS TO INTELLECTUALIZE EMOTIONS RATHER THAN EXPERIENCE THEM.

### SPIRITUAL LIFE CHARACTERISTICS:

- STRUGGLES WITH INTIMACY IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.
- VIEWS GOD AS DISTANT OR UNINVOLVED.
- RELIES ON SELF-SUFFICIENCY RATHER THAN DEPENDING ON GOD.

### CORE MESSAGE:

- "I CAN'T FIND YOU BECAUSE I CAN'T FIND ME."



## 2. DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

### CHARACTERISTICS:

- DESIRES CLOSENESS BUT ALSO FEARS IT.
- FEAR OF REJECTION YET PUSHES PEOPLE AWAY.
- EXPERIENCES INNER CONFLICT—WANTS CONNECTION BUT DOESN'T TRUST IT.
- OFTEN INVOLVES UNRESOLVED TRAUMA.

### DEVELOPMENTAL ORIGIN:

- DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO CAREGIVERS WHO WERE BOTH A SOURCE OF COMFORT AND FEAR (E.G., ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR UNPREDICTABLE BEHAVIOR).

### IMPACT IN RELATIONSHIPS:

- STRUGGLES WITH DEEP INTIMACY, OFTEN AVOIDING CLOSENESS DUE TO FEAR OF BEING HURT.
- ALTERNATES BETWEEN PURSUING AND PUSHING PEOPLE AWAY.
- HIGH STRESS AND RELATIONSHIP ANXIETY.

### SPIRITUAL LIFE CHARACTERISTICS:

- STRUGGLES TO TRUST GOD FULLY.
- TORN BETWEEN SEEKING GOD AND WITHDRAWING FROM HIM.
- DIFFICULTY RECONCILING GOD'S LOVE WITH PAST TRAUMA.

### CORE MESSAGE:

- "GO AWAY/DON'T LEAVE ME!"

NOTE: IF YOU WANT TO DISCUSS RECEIVING PROFESSIONAL HELP IN UNDERSTANDING YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE, PLEASE CONTACT TIN MAN [HERE](#).