

Adult Attachment - Feeling Secure in Your Relationships

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From the beginning, God created us to be in relationships. Genesis 2:18 says “it is not good for the man to be alone.” We all have the need and desire to be “attached” to others in loving, supportive, secure and nurturing ways. This is true for adults, as well as, children. We date and get married because we seek the secure attachment in a relationship. Author Susan Johnson says that at the core of primary relationships is the question: “Can I count on you to be there to understand me and respond to me when I need you?”

You may have heard stories about children from Eastern European orphanages who were not held or nurtured in their early years, having difficulty bonding with adoptive parents. This is an extreme example of an attachment problem, but many of us have had experiences that may make secure attachment to others difficult. Secure attachment is developed early in life when our “attachment figures” are accessible and emotionally responsive to us.

When they provide comfort, support and love, we feel secure enough to venture out and explore the world around us.

When our attachment bond is threatened our response follows one of two courses—anxiety or avoidance. With the anxiety, we typically respond with anger, clinging, or pursuit of the person in an effort to get that person to respond and reassure us that they are emotionally attached to us.

If we feel more hopeless about getting our emotional attachment, we may go the opposite route and become depressed, feel despair or eventually detached, avoiding emotional contact in an attempt to deny our emotional needs. We may even do a combination of anxiety and detachment by at first seeking an emotional connection, but then rejecting it when it is offered.



If you are concerned about your level of secure attachment, ask yourself these questions:

- Am I preoccupied with the relationship, looking constantly for signs that I am loved and connected?
- Do I feel anxious in the relationship and therefore resort to jealousy, blaming, criticism or coercion in an attempt to gain a connection?
- Have I numbed/denied my emotional needs with others, investing little of myself in the relationship?
- Have I become withdrawn/dismissive of others, taking a rational, cool and distant attitude in my relationships?
- Have I been hurt badly in relationships, but yet I seek them desperately?
- Do I have difficulty maintaining positive, secure relationships with those that are closest to me?

People who are securely attached see others as dependable and trustworthy and they expect to be accepted and loved. Insecurely attached people don't trust others and fear they will be hurt or rejected like they have been in the past. If we have a history of difficulty in relational attachments it will cause significant problems in our friendships, family and marriages.

How can we develop more secure attachments as adults? It involves working on ourselves as well as our interactions with others. Often this is done in the context of marital or family therapy and it can lead to a more rewarding and fulfilling life. Old wounds will need to be explored and understood. We will need to change our thoughts, feelings, perceptions and patterns of communication.



For more information, call

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