

## FEARFUL AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE (ALSO REFERRED TO AS DISORGANIZED)

- Results in a volleying of Anxious Attachment and Avoidant Protective Strategies
- Swing from being afraid of connection to over-analyzing the equality or depth of the relationship
- May feel overwhelmed and “stuck” in relationship, only to fear abandonment the next
- One moment they can smother their partner, and the next they can disappear for days
- This can result in break-ups, or extramarital affairs as coping strategies for fear of engulfment
- Can be the result of difficult or volatile relationships in childhood and/or ADULTHOOD and domestic violence (PTSD)



**How it feels typically?** Relationships can result in dysfunctions on both sides of the spectrum. This is very confusing for the partner involved as they will observe reactivity based on triggers from either being too close or too distant. Reactivity can include silent treatments, anger outbursts, break-ups, emotional volatility or more covert controlling behavior, such as infidelity, as a form of acting out unmet emotional connection needs.

You may feel alone and not understand why you cannot find the closeness you have always longed for (and need as a human being). You have a hard time believing that the chocolate bar exists because it has never been visible. Humans were made for connection so even if it may seem you don't want to connect, you have a deep desire for it. However, your behaviors ward off anyone who would otherwise come close.

**Within a Relationship:** As much as you want to be close, you become afraid of the very connection you seek and use anger or high anxiety outbursts to push others away when they get too close and you begin to feel threatened. You may have capacity for empathy however it can be comprised in states of perceived abandonment or perceived engulfment, which can fluctuate over time. You currently have an inability to truly connect to others emotionally.

Moreover, it is highly likely that you do not know how to build, maintain, nor respect the boundaries of others because your needs and boundaries were not known or respected in childhood (or in an abusive adult relationship). You are afraid of closeness and emotional intimacy because it has resulted in pain or terror. Vulnerability is seen as opportunity for someone to hurt you, so you avoid it. However, vulnerability creates intimacy and connection when it is met with acceptance validation and understanding.

### Where it stems from typically?

- Attachment styles typically form in childhood where we learn about trust, safety, connection, giving, receiving, etc.
- Disorganized attachment is formed from unpredictability, confusion, and, in some cases trauma - emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse in childhood. However, it may be the result of painful relationships in adulthood.
- Understanding both Anxious and Avoidant types can help explain how this Fearful Attachment Style forms.
- This style requires the most motivation and large investment in time and healing work to resolve.
- To form secure attachment, you will need to understand how you feel about connection, and your fears surrounding it that were programmed in early childhood or in an abusive relationship.
- Experts tend to agree that resolving adverse experiences related to this attachment style requires a therapeutic setting, where you can explore and heal experiences of attachment in conjunction with abuse, neglect, and emotional neglect.