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# The Disorganized Attachment Style

Having a disorganized attachment may mean that you went through more hardships as a child than others might understand, but you survived. You're here, reading this. This means that you persevered when times were tough and not only did a great job, but you're eager to learn more about who you are and how you function.



An insecure attachment is not a life sentence; through understanding, self-reflection, and perhaps professional help, you can make great strides towards more fulfilling relationships and personal life.



As you continue to read through this profile, you may find that the meaning and genesis of disorganized attachment will become more apparent.

**However, you might also find that some experiences and traits of this attachment style fit closely with your life, yet others might be incredibly disparate.**

This is because a disorganized attachment style can look very different for everyone who has it – the main commonality is that people who have it likely had a rough start in life. Well done – you’re genuinely incredible for making it to this point!

**\*Warning** - the following content may be emotionally triggering for some people. Remember that this information is a guideline, and your experiences may fit very well with it or not at all. There is a reflection exercise at the end of the upcoming passage should you wish to process or document your emotions/feelings.\*





## 1.1 How Does the Disorganized Attachment Style Develop in Children?

Attachment is formed around the quality of the relationship between a child and its caregivers. The disorganized attachment style is believed to be the most challenging type of insecure attachment. It is often observed in people who have been physically, verbally, or sexually abused in early childhood. They also may have experienced neglect or witnessed traumatic situations.

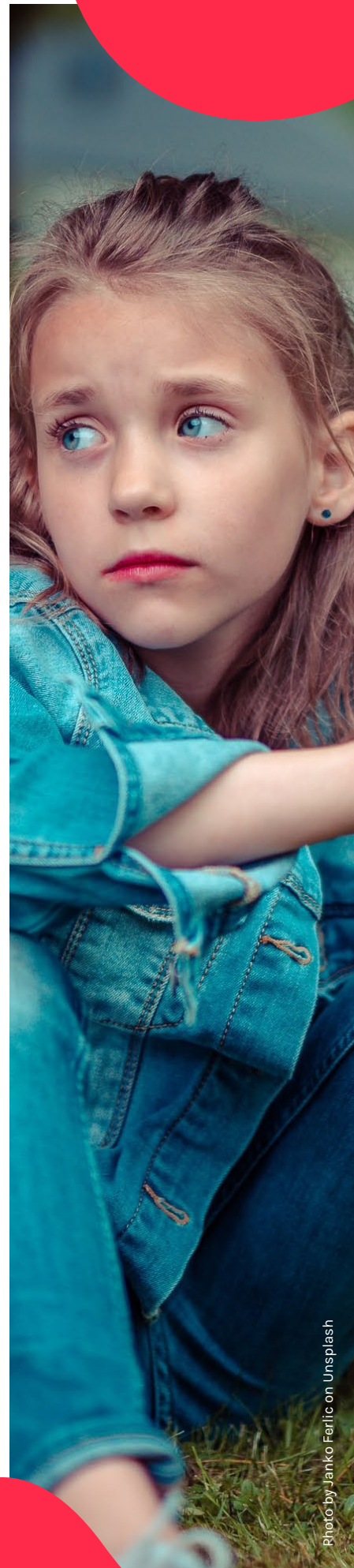
Attachment is created through the relationship with a primary caregiver, usually the mother or father. The roots of this attachment style are based in **perceived fear**; the child sees their source of safety (the caregivers) as a source of fear.



### BUT WHERE DOES THIS FEAR COME FROM?

When caregivers show highly contrasting behavior, then a child can start fearing for their safety. They don't know when their basic needs will be met, if even at all.

**Subconsciously, the child learns that the caregiver cannot meet their needs.**



Sometimes, caregivers are scared. They lack confidence in their own ability to parent, so their child is frightening to them. Other times, it's the caregivers that are scary and frightening. They might behave aggressively or threateningly towards their child. In more extreme cases, they might even be abusive. In some situations, the child may have experienced or witnessed a traumatizing event that involves their caregiver. For instance, the caregiver might abuse the child (verbally, physically, or sexually), or else the child witnesses the caregiver abuse someone else. Either way, the child no longer trusts their caregiver.

Now the child has a dilemma on their hands; their caregiver is a source of attachment, but now they're also a source of fear. How can they go to someone that they're scared of for comfort?

What's more, often, these caregivers have unresolved trauma themselves. This creates a barrier to bonding with their child, which causes the child to become disorganized as they try to figure out a way to get their caregivers to connect with them emotionally.

Unfortunately, children with a disorganized attachment style aren't able to adapt to their caregiver's behavior – it's too unpredictable. They end up confused and conflicted about how to act; should they seek closeness with the person they love? Or distance themselves from a source of fear?



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# Reflection

Some of the information we have gone through in this section might feel upsetting or triggering. We encourage you to take a few minutes to tune in to the feelings and emotions that you might be experiencing, as well as any changes that you notice within your body. Now is not the time for judgment, but instead a moment when you should be kind and understanding towards yourself.

## 1.2 Personality Characteristics

In adulthood, people with a disorganized attachment style can be highly inconsistent in their behavior.

This is because they have an internal battle between two opposing attachment strategies:

**Hyperactivation** is usually seen in anxious/preoccupied children; the child clings to their caregivers and screams for attention to get their needs met.

**Deactivation** is usually seen in avoidant/dismissive children; the child understands that their needs won't be met and distance themselves from their caregivers.

As an adult, disorganized people tend to switch between anxious and avoidant traits and the result is an unpredictable pattern of behavior.

Just like anxious attachers, disorganized adults can be clingy, needy, and demanding. Their desperate need for love makes them seek attention and approval from others. They can become jealous and suspicious due to their tendency to over analyze everything - even the most minimal things - that the people around them say or do. Disorganized attachers typically feel unworthy of love, and they live in constant fear that the people they love will hurt or abandon them.

Like avoidant attachers, disorganized adults presume that their needs will not be cared for by others. For this reason, they might find it hard to trust and rely on anyone else. They may shut down their emotions and become cold and rejecting towards others. Disorganized adults are usually uncomfortable with intimacy and often hesitate to let people in.

Sarah Lynn, now 23 years old, was abused by her father's girlfriend, Amanda, when she was a kid. Jacob, Sarah Lynn's dad, was a good-hearted person who adored his daughter. At the same time, he was so in love with Amanda that he trusted every single word that came out of her mouth. Amanda was always jealous of Sarah Lynn and resented her. So, every time she got the chance, Amanda did everything she could to hurt the little girl - both physically and mentally.

Growing up, Sarah Lynn never felt truly happy. She felt alone and misunderstood as if the whole world was against her. At some point during her high school years, she started hanging out with a group of kids who were into partying, drugs, and alcohol. Sarah Lynn was a good fit for her new gang and quickly picked up all of her peers' bad habits.

Somehow, pretty much everyone in Sarah Lynn's high school was interested in her. Half of them were impressed by how cool she seemed, and the other half thought that she was "completely insane." On the one hand, Sarah Lynn was fun and always up for a good time; she seemed confident and mature. She'd go to all the parties, dress provocatively, and often hook up with college boys. On the other hand, there were times when she would make a scene for no apparent reason. Dramatic and uncontrollable, she'd burst into anger and then shut herself off and not leave her house for days.

The truth was that Sarah Lynn never really felt "cool." She was depressed and scared. She wanted to connect with people, have real friends, and be loved, but she didn't know how. She was convinced that she was worthless and that nobody could ever truly love her. She knew people only hung out with her because they thought she was interesting. Besides, what was the point of trusting anyone when they were only going to hurt, reject, or abandon her anyway?





A typical disorganized attacher, Sarah Lynn's personality traits and behaviors are a mix of anxious and avoidant symptoms.

**On the one hand, Sarah Lynn is desperate for attention and approval. She is needy and demanding, and when things don't go her way, she makes a scene.**

But on the inside, Sarah Lynn feels unworthy of love and true connections. She often feels helpless because of her inability to control her emotions and moods.

On the other hand, disorganized people like Sarah Lynn can easily disconnect from others. They're unable to trust or rely on anyone, so they quickly back off and reject people. In more extreme cases, a person with disorganized attachment can push people away by deliberately hurting them, only confirming their belief that everyone abandons them at some point. This mix of behaviors might feel a bit like "I hate you, but don't leave me" in their relationships.



As you can see, people with disorganized attachment typically have a distinctive pattern of behavior. Let's sum it up:

People with disorganized attachment:

- Show contradictory and ambiguous behavior
- They are sometimes clingy and needy, and at other times, dismissive and distant
- Can be dissociated and disconnected
- Tend to feel lonely and angry
- Suspicious and jealous
- Might be manipulative, moody, and dramatic
- Exhibit instability, upheaval, and storminess in their relationships
- Feel like they don't have an impact on the world
- Often feel ineffective and helpless in life, and tend to have poor goal-oriented behavior
- Have a hard time bonding with, opening up to, and trusting others
- Fear that their partner will abandon, reject, or hurt them



## 1.3 Disorganized Attachment and Self-Development

At this stage, you're likely already aware that securely attached adults have an overall positive view of themselves and other people's intentions towards them; because their needs were met as a child, they consider themselves worthy of love, and they don't fear rejection. Essentially, they have healthy self-esteem.

On the contrary, having an insecure attachment style influences the formation of healthy self-esteem because if your needs weren't met as a child, then you might come to believe that your needs, and, thus, you, don't matter.

**This can cause people to repeatedly choose adult relationships that are unsatisfying to them, so they tend to experience romantic failure frequently without truly understanding why.**

When their relationships continue to fail, it reinforces their belief that they are unworthy of love, possibly even subconsciously causing them to behave in a way that sabotages their relationship – hence, this cycle of unhealthy relationships and low self-esteem continues.

But this isn't all bad news! As you already know – our attachment styles are not necessarily set in stone, and, therefore, nor is our self-esteem. In the upcoming section, we'll discuss what self-esteem, sense of self, and sense of agency are before discussing how to use some self-development techniques to improve your outlook on yourself, your world, and how you fit into it.



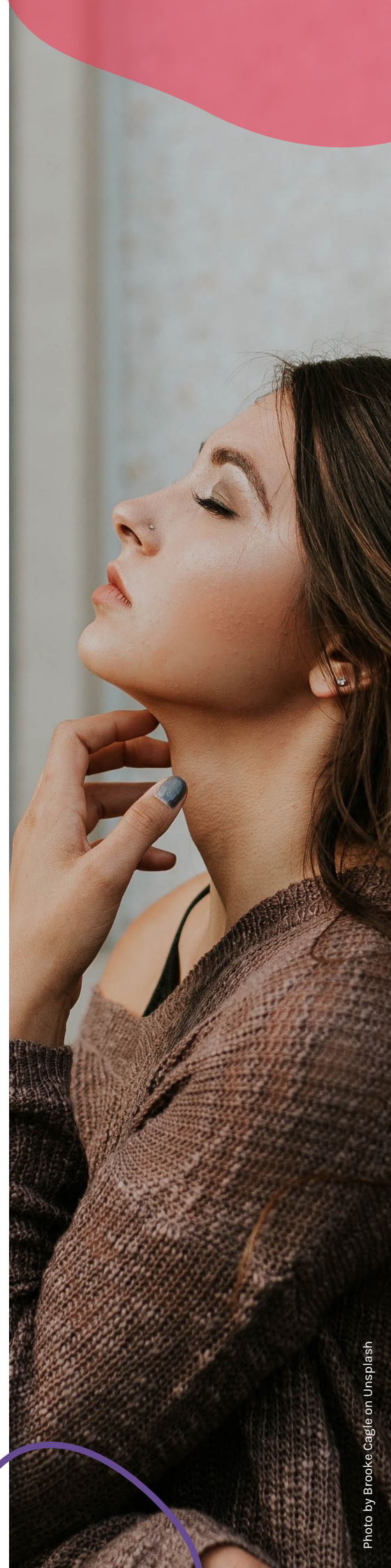


## SELF-ESTEEM AND DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

Your self-esteem or self-worth is how you feel about yourself or the opinion that you have about yourself; it is how valuable and worthwhile that you believe yourself to be. Your levels of self-esteem are often due to your experiences, especially those from when you were a child. Hence, since the way that we view ourselves and others are rooted in our attachment styles, our type of attachment is seen as closely related to our self-esteem.

Your levels of self-esteem are not related to how capable or successful you *actually* are – you could have an amazingly accomplished career, social life, or love life and still have low levels of self-esteem. Instead, self-esteem is more about how positive you **feel** about yourself and your life. Someone with a disorganized attachment style might have a negative view of themselves and others – they typically think that their needs don't really matter and that they are unworthy of love and acceptance. They may also expect the worst of others, including romantic partners, so they might behave suspiciously or jealous towards them. They could also try to protect their self-esteem by pushing a romantic partner away before they can reject them first. Still, when they actually leave, it only reinforces their belief that they are unlovable.

A disorganized attacher might also feel like they don't have an impact on the world – they might instead feel like the world is happening to them. It is out of their control, so they feel helpless, and they might not make goals for themselves in life as a result.



## SENSE OF AGENCY AND DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

A sense of agency, sometimes known as self-agency, is the feeling of control that you get over your actions and their consequences. When you complete an action voluntarily, you tend to feel as though you are in charge; the action isn't just happening to you – you chose to do it. You affect your environment, and even more importantly, you build a mental image of yourself and how you impact your environment.

Someone with a strong sense of agency knows that they can influence the people and objects in their environment to get the kind of reaction that they want. For example, when a little boy uses his favorite action figure to knock down some lego buildings, he knows the cause and effect of his actions.

**Essentially, having a sense of agency means that you feel like you're in the driving seat when it comes to your choices and actions.**

On the contrary, someone with a poor sense of agency might believe that they are powerless in their world – they think that things just happen to them and they have no control over it. *The world is happening to them.* For example, think of a voodoo doll; someone else is inflicting pinpricks on the doll and putting it in all sorts of predicaments. It has no control over what is happening to it. Someone with a poor sense of agency might see themselves as similar to the voodoo doll; they might feel like they have little to no control over their environment and other people's actions in it.





By now, you've probably come to predict that your sense of agency is affected by your attachment style; similar to low levels of self-esteem, having a disorganized attachment style may leave you susceptible to having a poor sense of agency. Due to their chaotic childhood, disorganized attachers tend to have deep-rooted shame about who they are as a person because they often feel unlovable, inadequate, and unworthy to the extent that they may never develop a sense of agency.

**Therefore, as a disorganized attacher, you might feel like the world is happening to you rather than you're having an impact on it. This isn't permanent - you may have to work on it, but that's ok. Understanding is the first step towards achieving change.**



## SENSE OF SELF AND DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT

Ⓟ People with low self-esteem often tend to protect themselves by steering clear of any form of a challenge as they see them as inevitable mistakes waiting to happen. On the contrary, someone with robust self-esteem welcomes challenges as an opportunity to achieve personal growth. Combined with their aversion to tasks that might help them personally grow and the belief that their opinions and needs don't matter, someone with low self-esteem might never really get to know who they are as a person. They lack a *sense of self*.

A sense of self is your understanding of the characteristics that you think define you. This might be your talents, likes, and dislikes, moral code, or your personality traits – all of these things contribute to who you are. Knowing who you are as a person makes it easier to acknowledge your positive traits -the ones that you should be proud of - as well as identify and change the ones that you would like to improve. However, having a vague or ill-defined sense of self makes it difficult to know who you are, so it's tough to fully understand what it is you want out of life and your relationships.

But here's the good news; we already know how adaptable to our environment our brains are – otherwise, we wouldn't have developed an attachment style so early in life, but this flexibility can have promising implications for the future too!

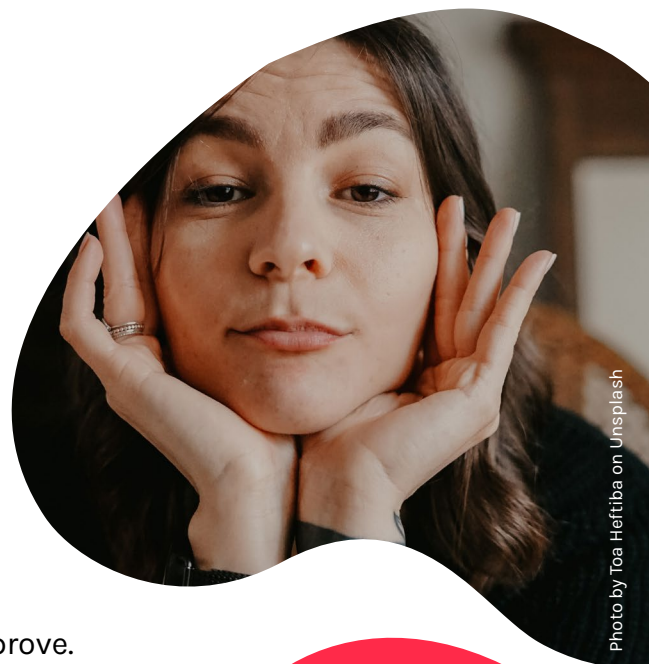
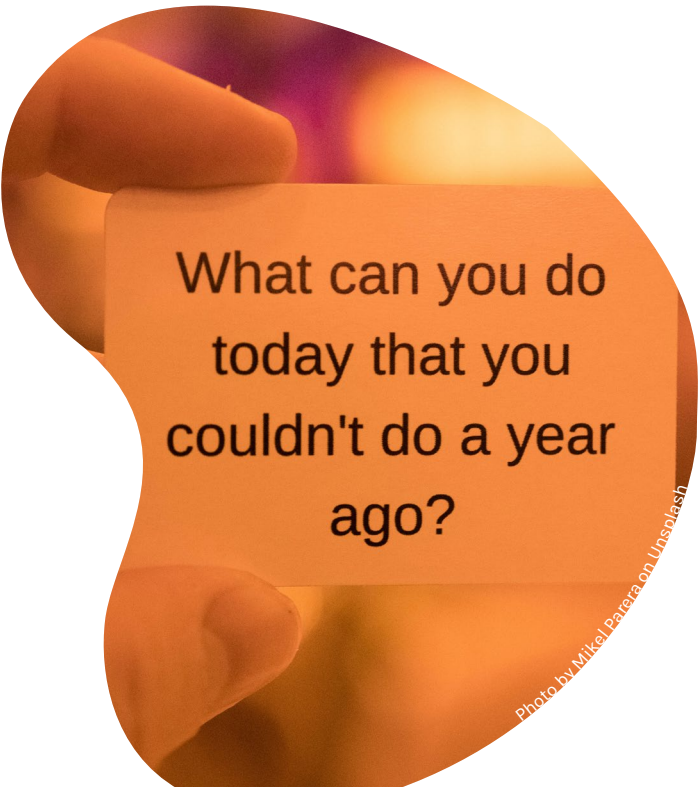


Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash



*Neuroplasticity* is our brain's ability to adapt to our environment. When we learn something different or try to make novel habits, our brains make new connections between their neurons. This happens naturally every day as we adapt to different situations, but it's also something that we can encourage and promote. Essentially, from the day we are born until the day we die, our brain rewires itself in response to what we need it to do.

This extraordinary ability means that you can develop a strong sense of self and use it to build your self-esteem.

A hand is shown holding a piece of orange paper. The paper has a question written on it in black text. The background of the page features abstract shapes: a large red circle on the left and a red wavy line on the right.

What can you do  
today that you  
couldn't do a year  
ago?

Photo by Mikel Parara on Unsplash

## 1.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Disorganized Attachment Style

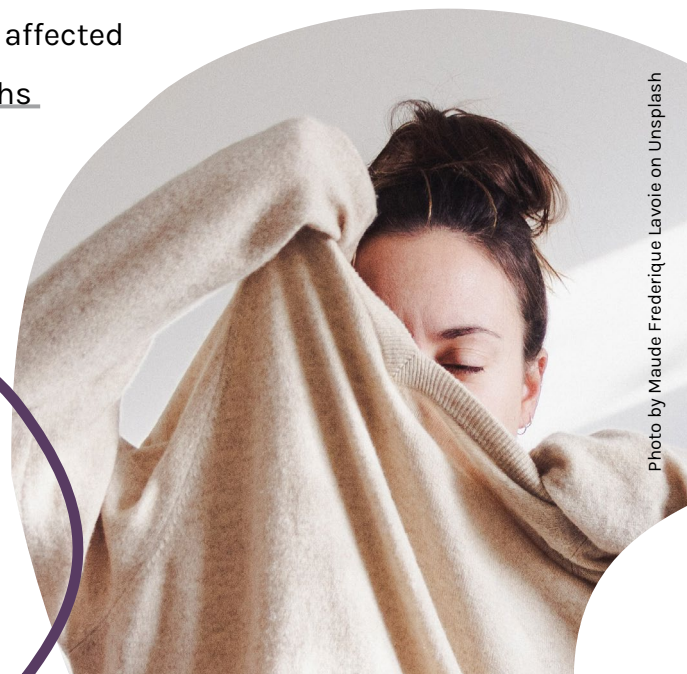
### Strengths:

- You can be resilient when times are tough
- You may be capable of taking care of yourself
- You can be social and fun to be around
- You value your connections with others
- You may not give up on others easily

### Weaknesses:

- You may be uncomfortable with emotional closeness
- You struggle to trust others
- You fear that others will reject or abandon you
- You may be moody and prone to creating conflict
- You might seek out emotional closeness and then turn away from it

We all have strengths and weaknesses, and some of these can be attributed to our attachment style. For support in uncovering your strengths and weaknesses, as well as how they have affected your life, please refer to the Discovering Your Strengths and Weaknesses exercise in the workbook.



# II.

## FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL GROUPS

Every friendship dynamic is different, but your attachment style likely affects how you relate to your friends. Remember, your first experiences of relationships may not have met your desire for emotional closeness. As a result, you may have certain subconscious expectations of how other people will meet your needs.

Of course, you're not just defined by your attachment style. Since your childhood, you have gone through many different experiences, met many different people, and perhaps even gone through therapy or figured out other methods of coping with your past.

**This means that you might be more equipped than others to manage the often tricky dynamics of friendships. For this reason, some of the below traits might sound like you, but others may not.**

A disorganized attacher may display traits of both the avoidant and dismissive attachment style in friendships. This might look a bit like "Come here. No, go away," as you might both crave and fear friendships. Because you might be clingy and anxious around your social group, you may end up frequently involved in conflict even if you don't wish to be. This could happen for insignificant reasons; for example, if someone failed to return a text message, then you might assume that they're mad at you, and as a result, you may become upset and confrontational. Someone with a disorganized



attachment style may also be prone to unpredictable moods, thus making it difficult for friends to stay connected with you.

As a disorganized attacher, you may struggle with trusting others and therefore balk at someone's attempts to grow close to you. This inability to be mutually vulnerable with friends can strain a relationship and make it difficult for you to maintain long-lasting friendships.

For more information on your potential strengths in the area of friendships, check out the section on superpowers at the end of this profile.

For help in determining how your current social groups operate, how you behave within them, and what you need from your



friendships, please refer to the Friendships and Social Groups exercise in the workbook.



# III. INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

## 3.1 General Profile

People with a disorganized attachment may be prone to stormy, unstable, and dramatic relationships. Even though they desperately want their partners to love them, they also expect them to hurt them. They're waiting for the inevitable rejection and disappointment that they've grown used to.

For someone with this type of attachment, the partner and the relationship are often a source of both desire and fear, which can cause extremes of emotion – sometimes they're angry and distant ("I hate you"), and other times clingy and desperate ("Don't leave me").

It's common for people with early trauma to recreate the conditions of their childhood. They may end up confusing feelings of love and being loved with physical or emotional abuse or violence. Therefore, one or both partner's belief that they were not worthy of love ends up being confirmed by the volatile nature of their relationship. It's challenging for disorganized attachers to let their barriers down as they risk showing their genuine emotions and people seeing their vulnerabilities.

For more information on your potential strengths in the area of intimate relationships, please refer to the section on superpowers at the end of this profile.

- ✎ Use the Intimate Relationships exercise in the workbook to reflect on how your anxious attachment style has affected your intimate relationships; what they meant to you and the role that you played within them.

## 3.2 Attachment Style Partnership Pairing

### DISORGANIZED-DISORGANIZED RELATIONSHIPS

It is pretty common for people with a disorganized attachment to be attracted to partners who are also disorganized. Consider it this way; when you have experienced traumatic situations, you may feel more understood and accepted by someone who has also had these experiences.

On the other hand, someone who tends to feel conflicted in their emotions and how to express them may also place themselves in vulnerable situations, engage in risky behaviors, and constantly shift their expectations in relationships ("come here - no, go away").

Thus, it can be difficult for a disorganized person to manage their own actions, let alone those of a disorganized partner.

It's not all bad, though. Suppose a disorganized attacher falls in love with another disorganized attacher. In this case, they can both take steps towards building mutual trust, to allowing themselves to depend on someone else, and towards sharing a happy and fulfilling future. It may take time, but nothing worthwhile in life comes easy.





However, it's essential to be mindful that such relationships sometimes have the potential to be retraumatizing as past wounds may still be fresh, so they may require intensive personal work to avoid hurting each other and themselves. Therefore, professional help may be necessary in order to see progress.

### DISORGANIZED-AVOIDANT AND DISORGANIZED-ANXIOUS RELATIONSHIPS

In relationships, an avoidant attacher typically prefers to be independent and not ask for help from others, even if they need it. They also may look down on others for being emotionally open or dependent on others. Someone with this attachment style may even come across as arrogant, but this is typically a defense mechanism for a fragile sense of self-esteem.

**For this reason, it would be unusual for disorganized and avoidant attachers to gel, but, hey! Why not? Stranger things have happened...**

An anxious attacher might hope for the best and believe that their disorganized partner can change instead of being able to move on with their life to greener pastures. Remember, anxious attachers tend to think that they are not good enough – therefore, even in a challenging relationship, they may believe that they did something to inspire their partner to behave a certain way.



Even if it's abusive. The anxious attacher may think that if they change their behavior, then the relationship will change along with it. What's more, an anxious attacher may be scared of never finding another love, so even if it means staying in an unhealthy relationship, they're convinced that it's better than being single. These relationships can therefore be quite toxic for each of the two partners.

### DISORGANIZED-SECURE RELATIONSHIPS

Secure partners may be able to provide stability for a disorganized partner in a relationship as they may help them regulate their moods and emotions. A secure partner is more likely to have a positive outlook than a disorganized partner, which may fulfill the disorganized attacher's need for emotional closeness. However, sometimes professional support or guidance may be required depending on the disorganized attacher's history and outlook.



### 3.3 Dating Online and in Person

The dating landscape of recent years is a new and often tough-to-navigate landscape. The constant evolution of smartphones and dating apps means that the potential to meet the right person rests in the palms of our hands. However, how do we traverse the masses of people who also wish to avail of the convenience of online dating to best ensure our chances of meeting a compatible partner?

Using your knowledge of your attachment style and its compatibility with the other styles may increase your chances of meeting an appropriate match. Although there is no surefire way of determining someone's attachment style through an app or on the first meet-up, keeping an eye out for certain attachment traits may help you determine whether a potential partner is a good fit for you.

Try to keep in mind, however, that even if you're not technically compatible with another attachment style, then this doesn't mean that a fledgling relationship is doomed to fail. We all have individual differences that affect how we behave within relationships. Therefore, if there is enough of a spark between two people, then it is entirely possible to overcome the challenges presented by attachment traits through either personal or professional work. After all, we have to believe that love can conquer all!

#### HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS SECURELY ATTACHED:

Someone with a secure attachment style is the safest romantic bet for someone with a disorganized attachment style. A secure attacher's early bond with their attachment figure(s) meant that their need for security, proximity, and affection was met. Thus, they



can effectively regulate their own emotions and those of others, typically have a positive outlook on themselves and others, and desire a healthy amount of affection and intimacy.

**Therefore, they can meet the emotional needs of a disorganized attacher and help them better balance their emotions and feel secure within the relationship.**

So how can you tell whether someone is securely attached either online or in person?

## ONLINE

You can tell whether someone has a secure attachment style through a dating app based on their messages and manner of communication. For starters, their profile will have their essential information but probably won't over-divulge too much. However, if they're interested in you, someone with a secure attachment won't hesitate to connect.

A secure attacher will ask questions about you rather than just speaking about themselves because they are interested in who you are as a person. Furthermore, they will also likely maintain a steady stream of messages without being too persistent or disappearing for days on end. Although they will be direct with you in your interactions, they won't overshare personal information - this doesn't mean that a secure attacher won't open up more in time, but they won't do so too early in the relationship.



## IN PERSON


Similar to meeting through an app, when meeting a secure attacher face-to-face, they will not continuously talk about themselves but instead will be interested in getting to know who you are as a person. Thus, they will ask you personal questions about your life and share personal information about themselves within reason. The secure attacher will be open, warm, and friendly. If they're interested in you, they will communicate that through their conversation and non-verbal communication, such as through open body language and steady eye contact.

Furthermore, as the date progresses, you may be able to glean some information about the individual's past relationships. If they are securely attached, they may have had a couple of long-term relationships, but may also have spent periods of time alone. This pattern is due to a secure attacher's comfort both in a relationship and by themselves.

## HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS ANXIOUSLY ATTACHED:

According to statistics, anxious attachers are more likely to use dating apps than avoidant attachers. Therefore, you are potentially more likely to match with an anxious attacher online than someone with any other form of attachment style. The anxious and disorganized attachment styles, although potentially explosive, also could be intensely loving and caring.

**This pattern is due to both partners' shared need for intimacy and strong fear of rejection/abandonment.**



Yet, consequently, each partner may distrust the other's intentions and act hypervigilant towards any potential threat to the relationship. What's more, as both may believe that they are unworthy of love, when they find it, they fight to make sure that it doesn't end - even if the relationship isn't working. So how can you tell whether someone is anxiously attached either online or in person?

### ONLINE

Anxious attachers may initially unwittingly masquerade as secure attachers during an online conversation as their first impressions are that of a chatty and open person. However, it likely won't take long for their anxious attachment traits to burgeon; instead of asking questions about you, an anxious attacher will probably talk about themselves to impress you and reduce the risk of rejection. They may also attempt to forge intimacy and closeness within the relationship by divulging personal information too early.

### IN PERSON

Similar to making a connection with an anxious attacher online, when you meet them in person, they may focus primarily on talking about themselves. Thus, pay attention to whether they ask you questions about yourself or whether the focus remains on them. What's more, their anxious attachment style may manifest in non-verbal ways, such as fidgeting, attempting to stand or sit too close, or maintaining too much eye contact in an attempt to seek connection and acceptance.



## HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS AVOIDANTLY ATTACHED:

It might be unusual for a relationship between an avoidant attacher and a disorganized attacher to progress past the first spark of attraction due to fundamental incompatibilities. An avoidant attacher's early experiences with their caregiver(s) can leave them feeling uncomfortable with vulnerability and intimacy. So to protect themselves, they often create boundaries and disconnect from their innate need to connect with others. However, this could trigger a disorganized attacher's fear of rejection: the disorganized attacher's desire for intimacy and closeness might cause them to push the avoidant partner to form a connection quickly - sometimes even in unpredictable or chaotic ways.

Remember - a successful and loving relationship between two people with these attachment styles is not impossible; however, professional support may be required to process previous trauma or instability issues. So how can you tell whether someone is avoidantly attached either online or in person?

### ONLINE:

The avoidant style is relatively easy to identify through app dating compared to the other attachment styles; they may be quite reserved during the early stages of your connection and perhaps not message too much or resist opening up regarding personal information. What's more, when you do talk/message, they may focus on non personal topics such as films or books that they enjoy, their job, or sports that they play.

Also, if an avoidant attacher loses interest in the relationship, they may back off by not messaging or "ghosting" you. This disappearing act can happen quite suddenly, in particular, after an emotional breakthrough or disclosure.



## IN PERSON:

Much of an avoidant attacher's behaviors in person will be similar to those through app dating; they will resist intimate or emotional disclosures. However, in person, an avoidant attacher will not only be closed off in their verbal communication, but also in their non-verbal expression; they may be quite reserved in their body language and have difficulty maintaining eye contact. For example, they may look at your chin or mouth as a strategy to avoid another person's gaze.

Remember - as a disorganized attacher, you may attempt to increase closeness by trying to push an avoidant attacher's boundaries through probing too much or forcing eye contact. This behavior may cause the avoidant attacher to feel unsafe, and they may retreat from the connection.

## HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE HAS A DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT:

It's pretty common for two people with a disorganized attachment style to be attracted to each other. After all, who is more likely to appreciate and understand what you've experienced in life other than someone who went through similar experiences? However, this does not mean that you're typically compatible with another disorganized attacher; as you know, a fellow disorganized attacher may vacillate between the anxious and avoidant dimensions of attachment depending on their mood and circumstances. Thus, they may be prone to unpredictable behaviors and difficulties with regulating emotions. Regardless of how passionate such pairings may be, you may both struggle to manage each other's emotions. It is also essential to recognize that attempting to help a partner cope with their emotions and past may trigger your own negative memories and emotions.

However, a successful and loving relationship between two disorganized attachers is not impossible. Just bear in mind that professional support may be required to process previous trauma or instability issues. So how can you tell whether someone else has a disorganized attachment, either online or in person?

## ONLINE

On a dating app, someone with a disorganized attachment style typically leans towards more anxious patterns of behavior because of their innate desire for connection. Therefore, they are likely to disclose personal information quite quickly in an attempt to establish a close and intimate bond with the other person. They may also talk about themselves a lot and not ask questions about the person they matched with. However, if things progress too quickly, they may back off and “ghost” the other person, meaning they may stop messaging without any clear reason.

## IN PERSON

Again, a disorganized attacher is as likely to vacillate between anxious and avoidant traits in person as they are online. Thus, they may alternate between both styles depending on their mood and circumstance. For example, when you first meet them, they might be eager to connect and talk a lot about themselves. They may hold eye contact and attempt to sit or stand in close proximity. Alternatively, they may just as easily be uncomfortable disclosing personal information, be withdrawn in their body language, and avoid eye contact by looking at your mouth or chin. It can be challenging to determine which traits a disorganized attacher will manifest on a certain day.



As a disorganized attacher, your triggers may change depending on your mood and current circumstances. However, if you would like to, or need guidance in, identifying your typical triggers in an intimate relationship, then refer to the Identifying Your Triggers in a Relationship exercise in the workbook.



### 3.4 Attachment in the Bedroom

By this point, you're aware of how disorganized people behave in relationships, so now it's time to see how they typically act when it comes to one particular part of relationships.

Let's talk about sex. Can your attachment style influence your sex life? And if so, how?

First thing's first - attachment absolutely does influence your sex life.

Think about it. Sex bonds two people. It creates intimacy and an emotional connection. On the one hand, it's how we tell someone, "Hey - I think you're hot!" but on the other, it expresses our love for them. And all of these factors connect to our attachment system.

By the way, when referring to your sex life, we're not just talking about the actual physical act of love-making. We're talking about your outlook on it, the way you think and feel about it, and the ways that you use sex to meet your *emotional* (not sexual) needs.

This is what we'll be covering in the following section.

## HOW DOES DISORGANIZED ATTACHMENT AFFECT YOUR SEX LIFE?

As we mentioned in the previous section, disorganized people tend to swing between anxiety- and avoidance-driven behaviors, which creates an unpredictable pattern of behavior. This tendency is also likely to apply to their sexual interactions.

On the one hand, disorganized attachers might be uncomfortable with physical intimacy due to their lack of trust in partners. They might expect to be hurt or abused by their loved ones, which might put a dampener on sexual desire. In situations such as this, the disorganized person might choose to abstain from sex altogether or else aim to have only casual, one-night stands. This way, they're not in a committed relationship, so they can't get hurt.

Alternatively, disorganized attachers can be highly passionate and loving towards their partners. Like anxious/preoccupied people, they often crave the love of a relationship. But at the same time, they also feel unworthy of love, so they're susceptible to rejection. This can cause them to become jealous and angry towards their partners, act clingy and demanding, and use sex as a way to manipulate their significant others.



Photo by Ha Nguy on Unsplash

This manipulation can take the form of using sex to provoke their partners into being attentive and taking care of them. They might also use sex to re-establish a sense of closeness; if their fear of rejection is triggered, sex becomes a way to feel more secure in the relationship.

**In general, disorganized adults might be less satisfied with their sex lives than secure individuals; they may have a hard time building long-lasting, committed relationships, where sex is a way of expressing mutual love and affection.**

To end this section, it's worth noting that your triggers, responses, and the way things turn out in a relationship don't depend solely on you and your attachment style. Your partner and their attachment style play an equally important role in the development and outlook of the relationship.



# IV.

## ATTACHMENT AND PARENTING

One of the most significant predictors in our parenting style is the attachment style that we developed with our caregivers – after all, it influences how we act in the crucial relationships in our lives, and our relationship with our children is no exception. However, even though you may be prone to repeating your caregivers' behavior, it doesn't mean that you actually will – **you are not doomed to repeat the past.**

How you understand and make sense of your childhood and your behaviors in your adult relationships can be an even more significant predictor of what kind of parent you might be. At any stage in life, you have the power to adapt and change your attachment style. It may take self-reflection, understanding your past, empathy towards yourself and your experiences, and sometimes professional support. Still, in the end, you can become a parent with a healthy and nurturing outlook towards your child.

**No parent is perfect - you'll inevitably make mistakes. Yet, if you enable yourself to repair any ruptures in the relationship, your child will likely grow up with a secure attachment!**

## 4.1 What to Watch Out for When Parenting With a Disorganized Attachment Style

Because someone with a disorganized attachment style might have grown up in an environment that felt unpredictable or unsafe, they might have felt fear or confusion about how to respond to their caregivers in order to get their needs met. As an adult, people with this attachment style might view others as unpredictable and untrustworthy but still feel like they desperately need love and reassurance. This may cause them to act both anxious and avoidant in their adult relationships. This can create a level of emotional turmoil for a child – on the one hand, their parent is affectionate to the point of needy, and on the other, they are aloof and distant to them. This can be pretty scary to a child.

**Furthermore, children are full of emotions, and they experience them with great intensity.**

This may be difficult to manage when you're used to avoiding your own. Their actions may even trigger a deep emotional upset as it speaks to the infant within you. Regardless, emotions are essential to healthy functioning, and it's your job as a parent to help your child adaptively express them.

As a parent, having children and loving them with all of your heart can be a motivating factor towards finally taking care of yourself. If you are aware that you have a disorganized attachment style, you must remain vigilant about your emotions and behaviors and the best way to express them.

Many professionals are there to help if you find that you're struggling with parenting difficulties.

## 4.2 How to Raise Your Child to Have a Secure Attachment

If you can remember, for a child to develop a secure attachment, they need to build in an environment where they feel **safe, seen and known, comforted, valued, and support for being their best self.**

It's essential to create a compassionate and warm environment for the child, one in which their caregiver can self-regulate their own emotions and reactions to upsetting stimuli. Doing so will help to pass on these skills to their child as they learn through modeling and observation. It's also essential to view a child as an individual so that you are comfortable with them exploring; children with a secure attachment see their caregiver as a safe base from which they can explore their world with confidence. They are satisfied with the knowledge that their caregiver is nearby and that they have someone to turn to if they get scared. This facilitates the belief that other people will be there for them.







## ATTACHMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

It's not just family, friends, and romantic relationships that can be affected by your attachment style – you might be more naturally inclined to act a certain way in the workplace too, for both the positive and negative!

### 5.1 What Are the Typical Characteristics of Disorganized Employees?

Unfortunately, to date, research has not overly focused on this form of attachment in the workplace. This is probably because it incorporates features of both the anxious/preoccupied and the avoidant/dismissive attachment style.

However, we can discuss the common traits of anxious and avoidant attachers – this might give you the chance to identify the profile that your behaviors align with the most. You might also feel like your actions switch between both, and that's absolutely fine.

The following information is based on the findings of many studies that examined anxious attachers' behaviors in the workplace.

We have separated the characteristics of anxious attachers in the workplace into two types; potential difficulties and challenges and positive characteristics.

## ANXIOUS ATTACHERS IN THE WORKPLACE

By this stage, we're aware that people with an anxious attachment tend to experience low self-esteem and high levels of insecurity and self-doubt.

In comparison to romantic relationships where this type of person may seek approval from their partner, it is colleagues, supervisors, and bosses who become the source of positive feedback and affirmation in the workplace.

Fitting in and being universally liked in the workplace are priorities for an anxious attacher. To achieve this, they might try to people-please and may actively avoid confrontation by conforming with the group's wishes – even if they disagree.

**What's more, fear of negative feedback may cause an anxiously attached employee to rely heavily on supervision and the team to complete tasks successfully. This, in combination with clingy tendencies, can end up driving colleagues away.**

Because anxious individuals set such high personal standards for themselves, they can become quickly dissatisfied with their occupation if they feel like they're not achieving goals as quickly as they would like. This can lead to the risk of burnout and drop-off from the job.

The following are the *potential difficulties and challenges* that an anxious adult may encounter in the workplace:

1. Preoccupation with being accepted by the group and seeking approval
2. Intense fear of rejection and negative evaluation
3. Conforms to group wishes
4. Overwhelming desire for interpersonal closeness & investment in social relationships
5. Negative expectations regarding the leader's behavior
6. Less ability to work independently and autonomously & over-reliance on the supervisor/leader
7. Hypersensitivity to feedback
8. Feeling under-appreciated and dissatisfied
9. Higher burnout levels
10. Counterproductive work behavior and turnover intentions



Photo by Charles Deluio on Unsplash



For every negative, there is a positive, and this is definitely the case for people with an anxious attachment style!

In fact, thanks to their sensitive nature, anxious attachers might just be superheroes when it comes to detecting risks, threats, and deceit in the workplace.

Their high personal standards and their need for approval from others cause them to be reflective of their performance and address any shortcomings that may affect their work. I'm pretty sure most employers would embrace the opportunity to hire someone so keen to improve themselves and their work!

Lastly, I think it's pretty obvious that an anxious employee would probably be the last person in the workplace that you would expect to create trouble. They want to be liked and to be seen positively, not as the office troublemaker.

Here are the positive characteristics that an anxious-preoccupied adult may bring to the workplace:

- 1. Better at detecting and responding to risks**
- 2. More accurate in detecting deceit**
- 3. Create less friction in the workplace**
- 4. More alert to their own potential deficiencies and hyper-vigilant about seeking ways to improve**

## WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AVOIDANT EMPLOYEES?

We have separated the characteristics of avoidant attachers in the workplace into two types; potential difficulties and challenges and positive characteristics.

Here are the potential *difficulties/disadvantages* that an avoidant adult may bring to the workplace:

- 1. Less positivity and more negative emotions**
- 2. Avoid interpersonal closeness and group tasks; prefer to work alone**
- 3. Distant; use work commitments to avoid socializing**
- 4. Negative view of and criticism towards the leader**
- 5. Resistant to leadership and new information (when forming judgments)**
- 6. Distrust towards others in general and towards a leader**
- 7. Seek less support from others**
- 8. Do not conform to groups wishes**

Looking at the evidence, one thing is pretty apparent; the avoidant, or dismissive, employee is not the social type at work. They do not seek out friendships with colleagues, and they don't need social support.

It's not uncommon for avoidant individuals to have a poor perception of the people that they work with – including their boss. They might look down on group activities as being beneath them and have an overall distrust towards others.

For this reason, they might prefer to work on their own. They put independence at the top of their list of priorities, so they might use a heavy workload as an excuse not to socialize with others.

There is the risk of avoidant employees in the workplace being labeled as the "troublemakers" of the office – they can resent leadership and may struggle conforming with the group.

Here are the *positive characteristics* that an avoidant adult may bring to the workplace:

- 1. Work well independently**
- 2. Better capacity to sustain focus on the tasks at hand and to get the job done**
- 3. The quickest to act in times of danger (effectively, without hesitation)**
- 4. Determined to get positive results from tasks**

Having an avoidant employee on your team definitely has its benefits, even if they are a bit of a lone-wolf! A recent study demonstrated that avoidant employees tend to detect threats and manage danger more efficiently than other workers – thus, their superpower is being the quickest to respond to a problem without emotion and hesitation! Also, let's face it, when a deadline is near, the avoidant employee will typically be the one who gets the job done.

What's more, the avoidant individual prefers to work independently and is good at it. They don't need extensive supervision or 'babysitting' in order to complete their tasks.



## WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Now that you've seen the typical traits of both anxious and avoidant employees, perhaps give yourself a moment to reflect on them.

Do you feel like you identified more with the anxious/preoccupied traits or the dismissive/avoidant traits?

If you can't figure it out, don't worry – it's totally normal for disorganized attachers to waver between anxiety and avoidance driven-behaviors. Remember, the traits of the disorganized attachment style can vary according to where you fall on the anxious and avoidant dimensions of attachment on a particular day and according to certain circumstances.

It's also normal not to understand or know what triggers the switch between both styles.

For more information on your potential strengths in the workplace, check out the next section on the superpowers of the disorganized attachment style.



Photo by Christina Wocintechchat on Unsplash

# VI.

## SUPERPOWERS

By now, you have learned about your attachment style in depth, your personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, the way you engage in relationships by identifying your triggers, your needs, and your soothing mechanisms. You also continued to learn about different types of scenarios for dating and behaviors in the workplace. The following are the potential superpowers of the disorganized attachment style in the different domains of their lives; relationships, friendships, and workplace. Now try to identify your personal superpowers that tie in with your attachment style and interests. Even consider ones that you previously may have thought were a challenge based on your attachment traits!

### RELATIONSHIP SUPERPOWERS

- A disorganized attacher may have the ability to retain their independence in relationships and not become overly demanding of a partner's time. Even though a disorganized attacher may crave connection and intimacy, they often put up boundaries to protect themselves from hurt. For this reason, someone with this attachment style can retain their independence in relationships and not become demanding of a partner's time.



Photo by Disruptive on Unsplash

- Alternatively, someone with a disorganized style may also give themselves over to a relationship entirely. If they align more with the anxious dimension of attachment, then they have the potential to fall in love easily and put a lot of time and effort into maintaining and protecting the relationship.
- Because a disorganized attacher desires emotional closeness, when they start to feel secure in a relationship, they have the ability to open up and welcome the intimacy that romantic relationships require. They may also be able to mutually provide a partner with the love and support they need to feel secure within the relationship.
- A disorganized attacher would typically hold their partner in high regard and may thus be able to help a loved one see themselves in a positive light. Their partner might even recognize that if someone that they care about can see their worth, then there must be some grains of truth in it!

## FRIENDSHIP SUPERPOWERS

- Disorganized attachers have the ability to be open, warm, and supportive to their friends. After all, they have experienced hardships, so there is likely no one better placed to listen to and understand other people's troubles.
- Other people are often drawn to a disorganized attacher because they can come across as sociable and cool. People initially admire their sense of adventure and daring but actually want to become friends with them when they realize that there is more to a disorganized attacher than their exciting facade.

## WORKPLACE SUPERPOWERS

- Similar to the avoidant and anxious attachment styles, someone with a disorganized attachment may be an evolutionary altruist. This trait means that they might be willing to incur personal costs to improve the quality of life of others. These personal costs can be quite clear in the workplace environment, as disorganized attachers that align more with the avoidant attachment style may be more likely to put in increased work hours to improve the team's output. This increase in productivity may come with a personal sacrifice, as they may focus so much energy on meeting deadlines and doing a good job that they might neglect their personal life. However, this may suit the disorganized attacher if they fall more on the avoidant dimension of attachment.
- Disorganized attachers may be more alert to threats in their environment. This ability means that they can alert others to a potential problem before it becomes a big issue and requires expensive resources to fix.

If you would like some help with identifying your attachment related personal superpowers, then refer to the Identifying Your Superpowers exercise in the workbook. Remember to stay open minded regarding your strengths – even though it might feel uncomfortable for you to identify your positive attributes, they are still there, and it's important for you to acknowledge them. You may even be able to reconsider ones that you previously thought of as a weakness and instead understand them as a strength!



PART III

# The Disorganized Style Exercise Workbook



# Reflection

Some of the information we have gone through in the disorganized profile might have felt upsetting or triggering to you. We encourage you to take a few minutes to tune in to the feelings and emotions that you might be experiencing, as well as any changes that you notice within your body. Now is not the time for judgment, but instead a moment when you should be kind and understanding towards yourself.

If any of the following activities feel uncomfortable for you, try to refer back to this reflection exercise to process your feelings.

## EXERCISE 1 | EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE

**1a.** How we interpret our childhood can help us understand how our attachment style developed. If it feels comfortable for you, try to take a moment to think of an early memory or perhaps something that happened to you that you heard about from someone else. It's not a question of judgment, but just observing situations that occurred in the past.

For example: I remember Mom and Dad left me at home alone when I was little. I was really frightened and hungry and I didn't know when they would come home.

**1b.** If you can, without becoming overly upset, try to remember some situations where you may have felt fear.

EXERCISE 2 | UNCOVERING YOUR NEEDS

The disorganized attachment style may often cause you to exist in a state of alertness as your childhood was unpredictable. Write down basic childhood needs that you remember from your childhood, or that you see with your children or people in general. You can fill any column in first; sometimes people find it easier to work back from what they think about themselves when identifying their childhood needs:

CHILDHOOD NEED	THE PEOPLE INVOLVED	WAS THIS NEED MET OR UNMET	INTERNALIZED BELIEF
Security (other examples might include love, food, play, etc.)	My mom and Dad	Unmet - I never really felt safe	That I'm not worthy of love and security



### EXERCISE 3 | UNCOVERING YOUR EMOTIONS

Emotions are a good indicator of your deeper functioning. Especially when they seem disproportionate or they overwhelm you. It might also be easier for you to start with identifying your emotions rather than the events that caused them. If you have difficulty recognizing or naming your emotions, then this link to an emotional vocabulary chart may help.

<https://www.englishlearnsite.com/vocabulary/emotions-feelings-word-vocabulary/>

Think of the formative moments in your life and try to identify the emotions that you felt during these times. These moments may be positive or negative. Use the following table to check all that apply and offer a real-life example. Try not to presume that you were overreacting emotionally.

MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE	WHAT EMOTION WAS PRESENT	FIELD OF LIFE (WORK, FAMILY, ETC.)	PEOPLE INVOLVED (RELATIVE, COLLEAGUE, BOSS, ETC.)
<i>My 7th Christmas - there were no presents or special dinner</i>	<i>Sadness and disappointment</i>	<i>Family-Home</i>	<i>Mom. Dad didn't come home.</i>

One more question: what do you think is absent from your table? Can you think of any emotions that you feel like you should have experienced but didn't?

For example: joy, light-heartedness, love, etc.

## EXERCISE 4 | IDENTIFYING YOUR PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

**4a.** Our formative years can impact the development of our personality. Which of your personality characteristics can you identify as potentially being a product of your attachment style? Try to think of both positive and less-than positive ones. Use the examples below as a guide.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Examples of personality characteristics:

- Confidence
- Warmth
- Hostility
- Scepticism
- Self control
- Apprehensive
- Perfectionism
- Creative
- Independence
- Sensitive
- Explosive
- Self reliance
- Trusting
- Impulsive
- Addictive
- Helpful
- Adaptable
- Curious
- Empathetic
- Energetic
- Courageous
- Generous
- Honest
- Patient
- Fair

**4b.** Based on the characteristics you wrote down above, which of the following is:

1. The most challenging for you?

2. The most challenging for your family/friends?

3. The most difficult to handle at work?

4. The one you would like to change? (if any)

5. The one you would like to cultivate more?

6. The one that gets you in trouble?

## EXERCISE 5 | UNVEILING YOUR SENSE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND SENSE OF SELF

**5a.** Your sense of self-esteem is essentially how positive you feel about yourself and your life. If you have healthy self-esteem, then you likely generally have a positive outlook. However, if you have low self-esteem, then you might struggle to see your positive aspects and modify your behaviour to become what you think others want you to be.

Use the following sections to help unveil your sense of self-esteem:

1. I am naturally good at
2. I am brilliant at
3. My family says I am great at
4. My friends think I am good at
5. At work/school I am praised for being
6. I am happy when I am able to
7. Something that I am proud of about myself is



8. When I think of myself, the first thing that comes to mind is

9. My view of self is \_\_\_\_\_ in comparison to my view of others

**Reflect on the above statements:**

- Put a checkmark next to the things you want to keep or improve
- Put an X next to the things that you are unhappy about and want to change/improve
- Circle the ones that you think are in some way related to your attachment style

**How many of the circled ones correspond to the ones with an X?**

For example: I am clingy and needy around the people in my life, but when they attempt to get close to me I push them away. I think this stems from my attachment style.

**How many of the circled ones correspond to the ones with a checkmark?**

For example: I am loving and grateful for the important people in my life, but I sometimes struggle to believe that they love me.



## EXERCISE 6 | SELF-DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUES

A disorganized attachment style is typically characterised by an intense inner conflict. Self-development techniques can help you to build an authentic sense of self. The following exercises can help you determine what is truly important to you in life, and help you uncover an honest sense of who you are:

### 6a. WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

Awareness of your personal values can be hugely helpful when determining a sense of self. Your values are the traits and characteristics that you admire in yourself or others. For example, maybe you have a friend who's empathetic and trustworthy, or perhaps you have one that is particularly gregarious - it's up to you to figure out what your values are and whether you're living your life according to them. They will keep you on the right track to leading a fulfilled life that's true to your sense of self and help you to engage in rewarding relationships.

What values are important to you?

For example: I am an honest and loving person, but I admire people that are outgoing so this is a value that I would like to develop.

## 6b. WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

What makes you feel like the best version of you? Everyone has things, people, situations, or places that make them feel truly at home in their own skin. Identifying these things can be helpful in determining the things that you value the most and can tell you a lot about who you are as a person.

For example: I feel happiest having quiet nights in watching movies when I am in a relationship.

### 6c. HOW DO I MAKE MY CHOICES?

Do you typically ask other people to choose what you watch together? Where you go for food? Maybe you say "yes" to others just to make them happy. Whereas these specific things might be trivial, they might indicate that you make choices based on someone else's interests rather than on your own. Perhaps ask yourself whether you would make the same choices if you were by yourself. Having a strong sense of self means choosing activities that are grounded in *your* interests and goals.

If this is too much too soon, perhaps just ask yourself what you really like: What's your favorite food, films, activity, downtime?

For example: I usually just go along with what other people suggest - especially on nights out. I don't really like to rock the boat. Sometimes I wish that we could do something a bit different for a change though, such as watch a movie or go for pizza instead of fancy restaurants.



## 6d. IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

Having a strong sense of self means that you acknowledge that you have strengths. This might be difficult for you if you struggle with low self-esteem, but we all have strengths, and it's important to identify them if we want to achieve the goals that we set for ourselves. What's more, making the best of your skill set means that you're more likely to develop a healthy sense of self and increased self-esteem.

Remember, if you've made it this far in life, you've clearly got an abundance of strengths – you've just got to account for them!

What do you think your strengths are?

For example: I'm an intelligent and interesting person with a lot to offer other people.

Maybe I can use these attributes when meeting new people.

EXERCISE 7 | DISCOVERING YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

**7a.** We all have strengths and weaknesses, and some of these can be attributed to our attachment style. Out of the ones discussed above and in your attachment profile, which do you identify with? Do your best to also think of ones that weren't mentioned.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES

**7b.** For each strength, or each weakness you wrote down, now think/write:  
An episode where it has been protective/helpful to you  
For example: Although I want to get to know people better, I don't let others get close to me as this has prevented me from getting hurt in the past.

A time that it hurt you in some way.  
For example: Not letting others get close to me prevented me from establishing close relationships.

**7c. Write down your most successful accomplishment.**

For example: I feel really positive to have made it as far as I have

Which characteristic do you think helped you achieve this accomplishment?

For example: I am resilient - I don't give up easily

Was it a part of a strength or a weakness written above?

For example: This characteristic is part of my strengths, but I wouldn't be as resilient without having to cope with my weaknesses

**7d. What is the most important role you have fulfilled?**

For example: Being an aunt is very important to me

Which characteristic helped you with this role?

For example: my loving and affectionate traits

Was it a part of a strength or a weakness written above?



**7e.** When you faced a significant obstacle, what strengths helped you to overcome the obstacle?

For example: problem solving skills, resilience, empathy, etc.

**7f.** Which strengths do others recognize in you that you are surprised to hear about?

For example: people tell me that I'm funny/that I'm hard-worker, etc.

If you cannot think of strengths/skills that others recognize in you, think of compliments you receive (at work or outside of it) and write these down.

**7g.** What do you think is still missing? What strengths or skills do you still want to achieve?

For example: I want to have a long-lasting romantic relationship. I think I may have to work on my boundary issues and develop my ability to let others in to my life for this to happen.

What is getting in the way of achieving them: (for example trust in others, a support system, intrinsic motivation, commitment to long term projects, the ability to maintain relationships in the workplace, capacity to work in a team)

## EXERCISE 8 | FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL GROUPS

**8a.** Our attachment style often influences how we behave in our friendships and social groups. Use the following exercises to determine how your social groups operate, as well as what you need from these groups to feel fulfilled within them. From the words below, pick five that best describes your social support system (feel free to think of ones that aren't listed):

- Meaningful
- Long term
- Turbulent
- Co-dependent
- Harmonious
- Awkward
- Supportive
- Formally cordial
- Expressive
- Chaotic
- Intimate
- Bitter
- Uncomfortable
- Intense
- Small
- Expansive
- Secretive
- Lonely
- Professional
- Love-hate
- Short term
- Distant
- Social
- Companion
- Intellectual
- Learning-based
- Competitive
- Stable
- Tempestuous
- Unstable
- One-sided
- Remote
- Hollow

**8b.** What do you look for in a social support system? Check all that apply (and try to think of more).

- Connection
- Sense of belonging
- Fun
- Understanding
- Validation
- Support
- Parent
- Close bonds

**8c.** What are my typical behaviors toward members in my social support system? (again, feel free to think of others).

- Clingy
- Understanding
- Agreeable
- Caretaker, the "mom/dad"
- Strict
- Jealous
- Strong-minded
- Crazy fun



**8d.** Reflecting on the last two questions: how do your behaviors support your needs from your social support?

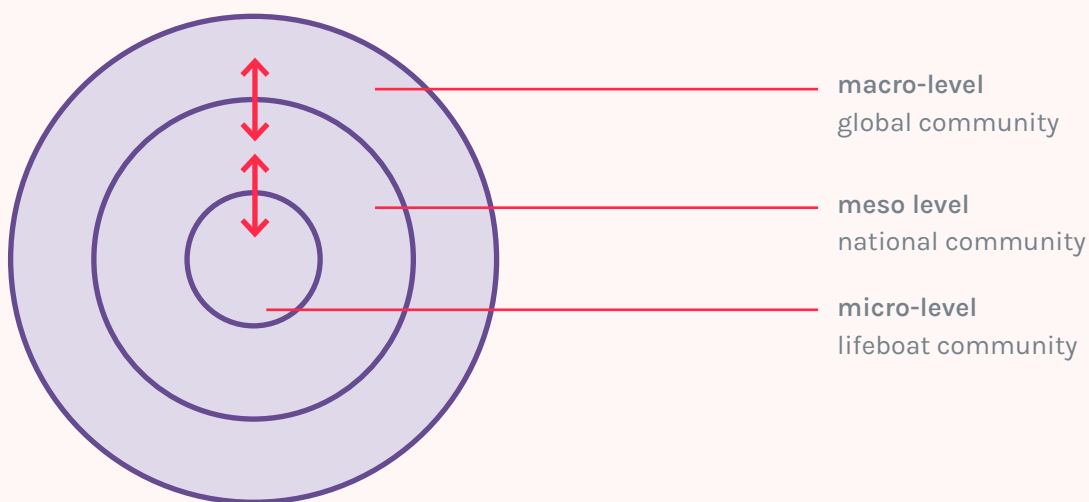
For example: I push others away/I cling onto others

**8e.** Take a look at the following graph. Write down people or relationships that are part of your circles:

Macro level: the people in your wider community, e.g. your work colleagues

Meso level: the groups that you associate with, such as wider friend group

Micro level: the significant people in your life, such as your partner, best friends, etc.



**8f.** Reflecting on these relationships, what some recurrent issues you come across with the relationships you have on a:

(Examples of issues are trust difficulties, dependence tendencies, miscommunications, lack of interest, lack of chemistry, difficulties forgiving, struggles connecting in big groups, etc.)

Micro-level:

Meso level:

Macro-level

**8g.** Which of these issues that you wrote down are the most bothersome to you:

For example: I find it hard to trust people's intentions in my wider friend group - this prevents them from becoming close friends

**8h.** Where do you believe these issues stem from?

For example: I think it comes from my belief that people don't hang around after they get to know me

**8i.** Place each problematic issue that you wrote down in one of these three columns:

Predicting factors | Perpetuating factors | Protective factors

Note: predicting factors are things that trigger your problematic issues. It might be someone not answering their phone, not replying to messages quickly enough, or using a certain tone of voice. Perpetuating factors are things that maintain these problems, for example, conflict within a friend group, or feeling down about yourself around others. Protective factors are those which you do to protect yourself from experiencing negative emotions, such as isolating yourself, freezing people out, or being too accepting.

## EXERCISE 9 | INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Take a moment to reflect on the intimate relationships that were important to you, regardless of the length. Try to remember factors like the kind of family they had, how you would have described the relationship (conflicted, passionate, violent, etc.), how long did it last, how many times did you break up, etc.

### Relationship 1.

Your partner's profile:

What the relationship was like:

### Relationship 2. (not required)

Your partner's profile:

What the relationship was like:

**Relationship 3. (not required)**

Your partner's profile:

What the relationship was like:

**Relationship 4. (not required)**

Your partner's profile:

What the relationship was like:



## EXERCISE 10 | IDENTIFYING YOUR TRIGGERS IN A RELATIONSHIP

**10a.** We all have individual triggers in a relationship. Furthermore, as a disorganized attacher, your triggers may change slightly depending on how you feel in your current situation. Use the following sections to help you identify your triggers in intimate relationships:

### Communication

*E.g., partner starts asking too many questions*

### Expressions of affection

*E.g., partner wants public displays of affection*

### Time spent together

*E.g., my partner wants to spend time with my family*

### Values or beliefs

*E.g., wants to share everything with me*

**10b.** Now that you have identified your triggers in a relationship, try to identify what you need in a relationship to prevent your attachment traits from being triggered:

**Communication**

*E.g., someone who gives me time to process my thoughts*

**Expressions of affection**

*E.g., someone who respects my boundaries*

**Time spent together**

*E.g., respects my time alone*

**Values or beliefs**

*E.g., does not judge my beliefs*

**10c.** What actions can you take if you recognize that your attachment traits are being triggered?

**That your partner can do for you**

*E.g., verbalize understanding for my boundaries*

**That you can do for yourself**

*E.g., deep breathing, turn off my phone*

**Grounding strategies for myself**

*E.g., name the color of things around me and three things that I can hear*

**10d.** List 10 things that make you feel safe in a relationship (examples: understanding, consistency, words of affirmation, etc.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Place a \* next to the ones that are a direct product of your attachment style

EXERCISE 11 | IDENTIFYING YOUR SUPERPOWERS

Use the following table to help you identify your attachment related superpowers. Do your best to consider attributes that you might currently view as a challenge or weakness – you may start to recognize them as a strength instead.

IN THE DATING SCENE	IN RELATIONSHIPS	INTIMACY/BEDROOM	AT WORK
Example: Enigmatic	Loving, but respectful of time alone	Committed to the person's needs	Eager to improve