

Adult Attachment Disorder

Unresolved childhood attachment issues leave an adult vulnerable to difficulties in forming secure adult relationships. Patterns of attachment continue through the life cycle and across generations. New relations are affected by the expectations developed in past relationships. There is a strong correlation between insecure adult attachment and marital dissatisfaction and negative marital interactions. If an adult does not feel safe with others, he/she will tend to be either rejecting of their partner or overly clingy.

Attachment problems are often handed down transgenerationally unless someone breaks the chain. As a parent, an insecurely attached adult may lack the ability to form a strong attachment to their child and provide the necessary attachment cues required for the healthy emotional development of the child thereby predisposing their child to a lifetime of relationship difficulties.

Depending on the genetic personality style of the individual and the early life events experienced, insecurely attached adults fall in one of two categories of insecure attachment:

AVOIDANT

- Intense anger and loss
- Hostile
- Critical of others
- Sensitive to blame
- Lack of empathy
- Views others as untrustworthy
- Views others as undependable
- Views self as unlovable or "too good" for others
- Relationships feel either threatening to one's sense of control, not worth the effort, or both
- Compulsive self-reliance
- Passive withdrawal
- Low levels of perceived support
- Difficulty getting along with co-workers, often preferring to work alone
- Work may provide a good excuse to avoid personal relations
- Fear of closeness in relationships
- Avoidance of intimacy
- Unlikely to idealize the love relationship
- Tendency toward Introjective depression (self critical)

ANXIOUS/AMBIVILENT

Compulsive Caregiving
Feel overinvolved and underappreciated
Rapid relationship breakups
Idealizing of others
Strong desire for partner to reciprocate in relationship
Desire for extensive contact and declarations of affections
Overinvests his/her emotions in a relationship
Perceives relationships as imbalanced
Relationship is idealized
Preoccupation with relationship
Dependence on relationship
Heavy reliance on partner
Views partner as desirable but unpredictable (sometimes available, sometimes not)
Perceives others as difficult to understand
Relationship is primary method by which one can experience a sense of security
Unlikely to view others as altruistic
Sensitive to rejection
Discomfort with anger
Extreme emotions
Jealous
Possessive
Views self as unlovable
Suicide attempts
Mood swings
Tendency toward anaclitic depression (dependent depression)

GOALS OF THERAPY

1. Identify early losses
2. Mourn the loss of that which never was but yearned for deeply
3. Provide closure to the unresolved relationship longings with parental attachment figures
4. Reorganize belief system and physiological reaction to attachment relationships