

Attachment Patterns in Adult Relationships

Using attachment concepts as a framework for understanding closeness, distance, reassurance, and protection.

A framework, not a label

Attachment language can help describe recurring relationship strategies, but it should not be used as a permanent identity or a way to diagnose a partner.

Common patterns

- Some people pursue reassurance or closeness when they sense distance.
- Some people withdraw or become highly self-reliant when emotional demands increase.
- Some alternate between seeking closeness and fearing it.
- Secure functioning involves flexibility: asking, receiving, setting limits, repairing, and tolerating temporary distance.

What helps

- Name the underlying need rather than only the protest behavior.
- Notice the cycle between two people rather than assigning one person all the blame.
- Practice direct requests and predictable repair.
- Build tolerance for both closeness and autonomy.

Try this reflection

When you sense relationship threat, do you tend to pursue, withdraw, appease, control, or alternate between strategies?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.