

# attachment tips.



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# HELLO!



My name is Thais Gibson, and I want to begin by congratulating you on taking your first steps towards knowing yourself, and towards bettering yourself.

This condensed E-Book contains a few articles that I have written explaining what attachment styles exist, how they are created, and how they interact in relationships. By understanding how yours or your partner's perceptions are created, you will be able to work on expressing yourselves and supporting each other in the ways that you need. It is designed to give you an overview of the attachment styles, and can be further supplemented by other material that I have on my website and in my courses.

Thank you for taking the time to read these articles, and I hope that you enjoy them!



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CHAPTER

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ONE

# ATTACHMENT STYLE OVERVIEW



## DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

The *dismissive avoidant* was emotionally neglected by their caregivers during their childhood, and learned that they must rely solely on themselves.

Therefore, they can be withdrawn and easily overwhelmed in relationships.

However, once they overcome their core wounds, they can be wonderful partners.

To learn more, see Chapters 1 and 2.

## FEARFUL AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT

Someone who is *fearful avoidant* typically had a childhood that was highly tumultuous - often due to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

However, they also typically had at least one caregiver that *was* emotionally available. Therefore, they tend to have an internal struggle between being vulnerable versus distant with their partners. To learn more, see Chapter 4.

## ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT

An *anxious attachment* stems from an inconsistent childhood. This means that one or both caregivers were emotionally available for their child, but on a highly variable basis. Therefore, someone with an anxious attachment has a subconscious fear of abandonment, and tends to self-sacrifice to maintain their relationships. To learn more about the anxious attachment and how to heal as one, see Chapters 1 and 5.

## SECURE

A *secure attachment* stems from a healthy caregiver relationship. In adulthood, secure attachments tend to have supportive and communicative relationships.

## A QUICK NOTE...

While reading this E-Book, keep in mind that people are not always just *one* attachment style - they can be a mixture of attachment styles based on their childhood experiences. However, by overcoming core wounds, we can all work towards being entirely secure in our relationships.



# CHAPTER TWO

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# THE ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT AND DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT RELATIONSHIP



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT?

*Dismissive Avoidant* is an attachment style that results from emotional negligence in childhood. The dismissive avoidant learns at a young age that they are not going to get their emotional needs met through other people, and so they repress the idea of it all together. Therefore, when a dismissive avoidant enters a relationship with another person who requires them to be vulnerable, challenges arise since they trigger the dismissive avoidant's core wounds. The dismissive avoidant can then shut their partner out, not because they don't actually need an emotional connection, but because it is foreign to them.

Challenges can also arise in a relationship with a dismissive avoidant when their partner has a different attachment style, like an anxious avoidant attachment style.

## WHAT IS AN ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT STYLE?

Someone who has an anxious attachment style had either one or two highly emotionally supportive parents during their childhood. However, their emotional support was inconsistent - for example, their parents were supportive, but were often unavailable because of work or other commitments. Another situation that would bring about an anxious attachment style would be when one parent is highly available and supportive, but the other is rarely present or willing to connect with their child.

Keep in mind that there are a variety of scenarios where an anxious attachment style can be created. However, the core notion is that the child had emotional support available, but there was a form of incongruency that truly prevented the child from always getting their emotional needs met. Therefore, people who have an anxious avoidant attachment style typically have a subconscious fear of abandonment, and as a child, attributed parental absence to something that was “wrong” with themselves. This subconscious belief then leads people with anxious attachments to constantly strive to “people please” in order to keep others around and satisfy their unmet childhood needs.

## THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND AND THE ATTACHMENT STYLES

The subconscious is primarily programmed through two mechanisms: repetition and emotion. If someone undergoes one highly traumatic experience, they will typically have a high emotional charge that correlates to that one experience. However, it can be argued that less painful experiences that happen more frequently can actually have a higher impact on the subconscious.

In the case of the dismissive avoidant, their parents continuously neglected their needs as a child, which taught them that you can never rely on people. In the case of the anxious attachment, they continuously experienced inconsistent and unpredictable emotional support, which created a subconscious fear of abandonment. Ultimately, their needs and expectations conflict, which can create significant issues in a relationship between the two.

## THE ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT AND DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT DYNAMIC

Overarchingly, the dismissive avoidant behaves completely independently, and the anxious attachment behaves completely dependently.

The operating perceptions in the relationship are on different ends of a spectrum, and this often leads to miscommunication and a lack of satisfaction. Since the dismissive avoidant tends to seek freedom in a relationship, and the anxious attachment needs intimacy and total commitment, the anxious attachment style can be triggered to become even more possessive and jealous. In extreme cases, the anxious attachment will even threaten to leave their dismissive avoidant partner not because they actually want to, but because they are searching on a subconscious level for the dismissive avoidant to ask them to stay and emotionally connect with them.

Interestingly, although the dismissive avoidant tends to feel overwhelmed when a partner is too demanding, it does not mean they do not need love and a strong emotional connection. The relationship must just be structured in a way that does not conflict with their attachment style - often, a relationship with a dismissive avoidant can be highly successful if they feel unconditionally supported, and their need for space is accepted.

## HOW TO MAKE THE RELATIONSHIP WORK

Fix things individually first - without first fixing the core wounds underlying each attachment style, problems will arise in the relationship due to conflicting needs.

### *The Anxious Attachment Style Needs to Learn to Self-Soothe*

This begins by taking the time to understand yourself at a deeper level.

Understanding of oneself comes from inquiring about the emotions that you feel, and noticing what is emotionally triggering. Since the anxious attachment style feels insecure as their dismissive avoidant partner withdraws from them, it is essential for the anxious attachment to understand that their partner distances themselves because of their attachment style, and not because they don't love you anymore.

By recognizing that your feelings of anxiety result from your childhood fear of abandonment, the anxious attachment will be able to question the stories they're telling themselves, feel calmer about the situation, and self-soothe in a more productive manner.

### *The Dismissive Avoidant Needs to Learn How to Rely on Others*

Although the dismissive avoidant may understand what they want in the moment, they often misunderstand their subconscious needs. Therefore, they must start examining their feelings on a deeper level - this will allow the dismissive avoidant to feel safer with their emotions and will enable them to be more vulnerable in relationships. For example: you may feel as though you want to withdraw when your partner is being demanding emotionally - why is that? If you feel that way, slowly but surely express those feelings in the relationship. You will come to realize it is because you are unaccustomed to being so emotionally connected, but that opening up with your partner is actually empowering. By exploring your emotions individually and with your partner, the dismissive avoidant will come to learn that people *do* pay attention and *can* be relied upon.

### *Challenge Stored Associations to Commitment and Practice Vulnerability*

The dismissive avoidant tends to feel threatened and trapped by commitment, and has deeply stored these beliefs. Therefore, they need to challenge these perceptions - question whether or not a commitment actually brings more positive benefits than negative, and slowly come to a position where negative associations can be reprogrammed. Often, the negative associations with commitment are from the past, and are not accurate representations of the present.

### *Notice How Good It Feels to Give*

Since the dismissive avoidant could not rely on people as a child, they often have a subconscious desire to reserve their resources. Therefore, the next time you are generous with your partner, just notice how good it feels to give. It brings emotional connection, and again, challenges historical associations that may not be accurate presently.

### *Be Conscious of Your Partner's Emotional Needs*

In a situation where the dismissive avoidant is actively attempting to be vulnerable with their partner, ensure that space is held for that moment - since it is a deep wound for them, it is essential to be gentle with them and avoid hurting them by further neglecting that need.

Conversely, the dismissive avoidant must intentionally try to extend themselves emotionally for their anxious attachment partner to help build the relationship further.

If both partners work slowly individually on their core wounds, and actively care for their partner's needs, the healthier and happier the relationship will be.

CHAPTER

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THREE

# THE DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT'S IDEA OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP



## THE DISMISSIVE AVOIDANT IN A RELATIONSHIP

Since a dismissive avoidant's parents were unsupportive at a young age, they find it difficult to rely on other people - often, they withdraw when others offer or expect help. Withdrawal typically occurs because the dismissive avoidant either consciously or subconsciously believes that everyone is responsible solely for themselves, and feels overwhelmed when people become too involved in their life. They have a deep-rooted belief that they are fine as they are, and do not need others to get by.

Although dismissive avoidants can sometimes be challenging to understand in a relationship, they tend to express a few core patterns that, when acknowledged and nurtured, can lead to a healthy relationship.

## THEIR CORE PATTERNS

### *The Dismissive Avoidant Wants to Feel Supported*

For the dismissive avoidant, feeling supported means feeling understood - their actions need to be accepted by their partner. For example, if they suddenly want to spend a few hours alone, their partner needs to let them do so without consequence. Dismissive avoidants need to feel as though their autonomy is respected, and that you will support them in the ways that their attachment style demands.

## *Consistency Is Essential*

Both consistency and clarity are important for a dismissive avoidant. When communicating with them in a relationship, do not leave them to read between the lines. Remember: within *their* perceptual filter, they believe that everyone is accountable for their own personal needs. Therefore, dismissive avoidants are unlikely to understand, and moreover seek out, subtle hints in relationships. If needs are not clearly communicated to them, they will feel frustrated and confused, particularly when conflict arises from miscommunication.

When needs are clearly communicated between a dismissive avoidant and their partner, especially when they are consistently communicated over time, a stronger bond will form as a result of mutual respect and understanding. Moreover, consistency leads to predictability, which is something that their childhood lacked entirely. As you introduce predictability into their life, they will begin to feel safer with you and will allow themselves to be more vulnerable in the relationship.

## *Unconditional Acceptance*

As a child, it is difficult to understand that a parent can sometimes be emotionally unavailable. Since dismissive avoidants grow up with their needs neglected, they come to believe on a subconscious level that there is something wrong with them, rather than grasping that their parents may be dealing with issues that are completely unrelated to them. Therefore, when dismissive avoidants are criticised, it tends to hurt them deeply since it affirms their core emotional belief that they are defective. Since this belief is highly subconscious, they will then shut down and avoid putting themselves in vulnerable positions in the future with their partner. Alternatively, by neutralizing criticism with validation or delivering it in a constructive manner, you are able to help them grow while being conscious of their unmet needs from childhood.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

When in a relationship with a dismissive avoidant, it is essential to help them understand themselves and why they feel the way they do, and to express your emotions to them clearly. By doing so, you will help them to meet your needs, and will teach them that it is also safe to rely on others - something that has historically been foreign to them. By focusing on communication, autonomy, and acceptance, a healthy and fulfilling relationship can be built with a dismissive avoidant.

CHAPTER

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FOUR

# HOW TO HEAL THE FEARFUL AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE



## WHAT IS THE FEARFUL AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE?

People who have a fearful avoidant attachment style typically express an ongoing ambivalence in relationships - they constantly shift between being vulnerable with their partner and being distant. This attachment style develops when, in childhood, a parent is emotionally available to their child, but their child doesn't entirely trust them. Often, the absence of trust stems from a turbulent household, whether it be from emotional, sexual, or physical abuse. Therefore, in adulthood, those with fearful avoidant attachment styles have a strong desire for their partner to meet their needs, but are simultaneously uncomfortable trusting them.

Since the fearful avoidant tends to have immense internal conflict, they often end up projecting feelings of frustration or resentment onto their partner. Since they, from a young age, perceived love as a turbulent and chaotic entity, their subconscious essentially feels safe recreating that environment since there is a sense of familiarity.

The fearful avoidant also tends to express something called *depth of processing*. This means that they overanalyze their partner's microexpressions and body language for signs of betrayal. Since their core wounds are related to trust, they tend to control or manipulate their way out of being betrayed. When they feel as though they have lost control of their feelings and may be overly vulnerable, they will respond with anxiety and frustration towards their partner because of their

subconscious fear surrounding the stability of love and relationships.

Unfortunately, this behavior is what actually tends to perpetuate chaos in the relationship, and unless it is addressed, will continue to do so.

## HOW TO HEAL

### *The Fearful Avoidant Needs to Learn to Communicate and be Vulnerable*

The fearful avoidant tends to be naturally suspicious, and will not communicate their feelings well. Therefore, they tend to assign a lot of untrue meaning to actions. For example: if their partner comes home 10 minutes late, they will suspect they have been untruthful, rather than asking about what actually happened. After internalizing such beliefs, the fearful avoidant will later tend to lash out from the unjustified anger they feel. What the fearful avoidant may not realize, is that those beliefs stem from early childhood when they experienced betrayal through a form of abuse, or they may realize this but be uncomfortable being vulnerable enough to express this to their partner.

Therefore, to be able to say something like: "I feel insecure about why you may be home late" allows the fearful avoidant to be vulnerable with their partner in a way that prevents future fights that stem from internalized emotions. It also allows them to acknowledge that their insecurity may have resulted from past experiences, and will help them to reprogram beliefs in a way that is more reflective of their current relationship. Their partner also then has the opportunity to reinforce the fact that they are in a safe relationship by invalidating the stories that the fearful avoidant may be telling themselves.

### *The Fearful Avoidant Needs Reprogram Their Subconscious*

"Reprogramming" refers to changing the beliefs that your subconscious mind stores. Since the subconscious mind is programmed through repetition and

emotion, the fearful avoidant needs to give their brain multiple examples of how they are safe today to reprogram the beliefs it created when they were a child. For example: "I am safe today because if my partner were to hurt me unjustly, I have the adult capabilities to leave", or "I now have the autonomy and freedom to take care of myself and be safe with myself". Through repetition and reasoning, you can convince yourself that you are safe to experience love, and that you are safe in the worst case scenario. Since the subconscious mind builds beliefs through repetition, outdated beliefs must be undone by grounding new beliefs in specific examples and events where being vulnerable resulted in happiness. An example of this could be: "Loving another person allows me to feel fulfilled and express myself".

Summatively, the key piece for the fearful avoidant to understand is how to be vulnerable in their relationships. Although they tend to have tumultuous relationships, it is important to note that it is not because of any fault of their own - it is because they experienced trauma in early childhood in their close relationships. By recognizing core wounds, reprogramming them, and reintegrating new beliefs into your life, the fearful avoidant can shift into a secure attachment style and have a much better relationship.

# CHAPTER FIVE

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# HOW TO HEAL THE ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT STYLE



## WHAT IS THE ANXIOUS ATTACHMENT STYLE?

As mentioned in previous articles, the anxious attachment style stems from inconsistent emotional support during childhood. Inconsistency can be a result of a supportive but consistently absent parent, or other scenarios where a parent has the ability to relate and understand their child, but not always the availability. Consequently, the child will feel a sense of abandonment, will self-sacrifice to meet the needs of others in adulthood. By self-sacrificing to “people please”, they subconsciously believe that those around them will not abandon them.

Those with an anxious attachment style tend to feel they are not good enough, a strong sense of loneliness, a sense of rejection, and as though they are unlovable - all due to the core subconscious wounds created during their childhood. By recognizing the origin of these feelings, you will be able to reprogram them to more accurately represent your true worth, and improve your relationships.

## HOW TO OVERCOME CORE WOUNDS

### *Recognize Where Your Feelings are Originating From*

As children, we are reliant upon our caregivers for survival. Therefore, you need to recognize that many of your feelings of anxiety that arise from a partner who is seemingly unavailable originate from your primal, subconscious fear of abandonment. Once you can acknowledge and address the origin of your emotions, you need to make a distinction between your past and present.

Remember in this moment that you are safe, your needs are taken care of. For example, your partner not answering their phone for a few hours is not a repetition of the abandonment you experienced in your childhood - moreover, you now can fend for yourself with or without your partner, and this *isn't* about survival. By recognizing and differentiating the circumstances, you address your trigger and perceive your reality more accurately. Further, by making this distinction every time you fear abandonment, you will be able to teach your subconscious that your reality is now different than it was in childhood.

### *Focus on Self-Connection*

People with an anxious attachment are hypersensitive to the people and relationships they have outside of themselves. Due to their core fear of abandonment, they tend to focus on connecting with others, and often forget about looking intrinsically to address their own needs. Essentially, people with an anxious attachment also emotionally abandon *themselves* in favor of seeking approval of others.

However, this causes a disproportionate allocation of your energy - and this further fuels your belief that you need others to be alright. The thing is, you do not. To overcome the belief that you can't be self-sufficient, you must reprogram your subconscious through repetition and emotion. Keep in mind that you did not come into this world with these beliefs - your mind learned them through repetitive, emotionally-based experiences. Therefore, you must re-learn the opposite to overcome these beliefs. By writing down: "I am safe, and I can rely on myself to get my needs met because [fill in the blank with a specific example of what you do or have done]", you will gradually convince yourself, through multiple examples, that you truly can be self-sufficient and meet your own needs.



The examples that you use can be as simple as: "I am safe, and I can rely on myself to get my needs met because when I was overwhelmed last week I took the time to go for a walk and calm myself down".

Once you realize that you can truly be the primary source of getting your needs met, you will address the core anxiety surrounding your fear of being abandoned and not being able to survive without others. To help solidify your new, updated beliefs, there is a five step process that you can follow.

### *The Five Step Reprogramming Process*

#### *1. Identify and Label the Pain You Feel in The Moment*

To illustrate what this means, let's consider an example. You have a new date arranged for Friday night, but they haven't gotten back to you to confirm. Ask yourself: what do you feel in this situation? It will most likely be anxiety, stress, fear of abandonment, or many other emotions along a similar spectrum. Begin by identifying your feelings so that you can then convert them.

#### *2. Ask Yourself: What Meaning am I Giving to the Situation?*

Ask yourself what stories you are telling yourself to elicit the emotional response you are having. The stories you're telling yourself may be that you're not good enough, not interesting enough, you will never find a partner, or a variety of other perceptions that may actually be entirely inaccurate.

Write these beliefs down to help clearly identify the meaning that you're assigning to the situation.

#### *3. Question These Beliefs*

Ask yourself: can you absolutely know these thoughts are true? This work is meant to undo the inaccurate perceptions that you may still be viewing your life through as

a result of the experiences you had in childhood, and the subconscious programs that may still be running your life. Therefore, by questioning the validity of these beliefs, you can truly look at your reality through an updated lense.

#### *4. Find Proof of The Opposite*

As mentioned earlier in this article, you must find examples that contradict your negative beliefs to help reprogram your subconscious. By finding proof of the opposite, you will be able to recognize that the stories you are telling yourself *are* inaccurate. For example, find a time where you *were* good enough or someone *did* care about you. Again, by repeatedly proving to yourself that you truly are good enough and can be self-sufficient, you will help to undo the negative associations you are still carrying from your childhood.

#### *5. If Things Don't Work Out - Look for a Strategy*

Occasionally, the negative things that we are telling ourselves are come to fruition. If we find we are faced with such a situation, look for a strategy. This is still part of your healing process. As an anxious avoidant, by looking for a different strategy and investing your energy into a positively-oriented solution, you are only further proving to yourself that you truly can be self-sufficient. This could include taking time to work on yourself, or go on that blind date your friend is trying to set you up on.

Overall, regardless of the circumstances, someone with an anxious attachment must work towards first recognizing and meeting their own needs. Once they have, they will be better equiptped to love themselves and love others.



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