

Attachment Patterns

All infants develop attachment patterns based on their experiences with caregivers.

These patterns influence how we approach relationships throughout life.

Understanding attachment patterns promotes mindful awareness and can help adults foster healthy patterns in the children they care for. When adults reflect on their attachment histories, they gain a clearer understanding of their behaviors in relationships and identify areas where they may need to develop healthier patterns.

The good news is that we can always learn healthier patterns as we grow.



SECURE

Infants/Young Children

Freely explores their environment; seeks out the caregiver when distressed and is easily soothed by the caregiver's presence; expresses a range of emotions openly with the caregiver

Youth/Young Adults

Understand the intentions of their peers; open and flexible in emotional expression and thinking; sensitive to others' needs; adaptable; and maintain a healthy connection to others

Adults

Rely on relationships with others to meet their needs; authentic—what is going on inside (feelings) matches what others see on the outside (behaviors)



AVOIDANT

Infants/Young Children

Do not show outward signs of distress; demonstrate a high level of autonomy or independence incongruent with their age; turn to toys/objects as distractions; avoid close contact with the caregiver

Youth/Young Adults

Can have unrealistic expectations of peers; minimize uncomfortable emotions; idealize life; become overly self-reliant; and turn to work or hobbies for distraction

Adults

Self-protective of emotions; less physically affectionate; more focused on activities and interests than relationships

TRUST-BASED RELATIONAL INTERVENTION® (TBRI®)



AMBIVALENT

Infants/Young Children

Go to the caregiver but then resist comfort; become very upset when separated from the caregiver and not easily calmed when reunited; may want to be picked up, then push away and want to be set down

Youth/Young Adults

Increased expression of difficult emotions to engage others; inconsistently available in relationships; fear of abandonment, particularly in romantic relationships; and highly dependent on others

Adults

Intrusive with care and in relationships, getting very close quickly; may try to control situations or others; and may harbor anger or resentment toward caregivers



DISORGANIZED

Infants/Young Children

Contradictory behaviors, such as being clingy and then pushing away; repetitive movements in the presence of the caregiver, such as flapping hands or rocking; and fearful behaviors, such as freezing, backing into a corner, or moving away suddenly

Youth/Young Adults

Mental health challenges or diagnosis; contradictory behaviors in relationships; controlling behaviors toward caregivers; seeing self and/or caregivers as both victim and persecutor; and aggressive or attempting to control situations

Adults

May mentally check out or dissociate; mental health challenges or diagnosis; and confusing, chaotic relationships

Additional Resources



[The TBRI®
Podcast:
Attachment: Why
It Matters](#)



[Empowered to
Connect: The Power
of Understanding
Attachment with
Dr. Casey Call - Part 1](#)



[Empowered to
Connect: The Power
of Understanding
Attachment with
Dr. Casey Call - Part 2](#)