



# Mindful Parenting: Attachment Series

## TYPES OF ATTACHMENT

Attachment is the unique emotional relationship between you and your children which enables the parts of their brains responsible for social and emotional development, communication and relationships to grow.

*Early attachment style has an enormous impact on our children's emotional and physical well-being.*

There are 4 types of Attachment: **Secure; Anxious-avoidant; Anxious-ambivalent; Disorganized.**

Secure Attachment (55-65%) - Develops through consistent attunement to your child's needs.

### Parents who create a secure attachment:

- Have consistent, emotionally attuned, contingent communication with their children
- Have and model good self-regulation (ie. the ability to self-soothe and move through difficult emotions)
- Are emotionally available, perceptive and responsive to their children's needs
- Validate and mirror their children's feelings
- Are calm and responsive in times of stress
- Quickly repair the relationship when there is a misconnection

### Children with a secure attachment:

- Are flexible and resourceful
- Are confident exploring their environments
- Are open to learning
- Have fewer behavioral problems
- Are better able to get along with other children
- Have a greater capacity for empathy

### **Children with a secure attachment grow into adults who:**

- Have fulfilling relationships
- Are at lower risk for mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and addiction
- Have good self-regulation
- Are resilient
- Are self-confident
- Are able to rebound from disappointment and loss
- Are able to share their feelings and reach out for help in times of need

Anxious-Avoidant Attachment Style (20-30%) - develops when parents find the needs and emotions of their children overwhelming and irritating and become emotionally unavailable to their children in times of distress.

### **Parents who create and anxious-avoidant attachment:**

- Are detached from their own feelings
- Feel children should be “seen and not heard”
- Are emotionally unavailable
- Can be distant and cold
- Find it hard to be nurturing
- Have a “you have to look out for yourself” motto
- Encourage limited expression of emotions in children

### **Children with an anxious-avoidant attachment:**

- Restrict emotions and needs
- Become independent at an early age
- Learn not to look to parents for comfort in times of distress
- Avoid emotions
- Hide their needs
- Reluctant to ask for help
- Unconsciously internalize that you can't rely on others
- Earn parents' approval by becoming proficient in sports, school, an activity...
- Are shut down to emotions and needs
- Feel a sense of emptiness
- Tend to be “left-brain” dominant

## **Children with an anxious-avoidant attachment grow into adults who:**

- Have a limited range of emotions
- Are generally even-tempered but can become angry when others push for connection
- Are prone to chronic, low-grade depression
- Don't seek out comfort
- Are self-reliant to a fault
- Lack deeply connected relationships
- Are detached from their emotions
- Aren't aware that they need emotional connection
- Do not like being "needed"
- Seek approval from the tasks they perform
- Feel that expression of emotions is a sign of weakness
- Have trouble maintaining relationships

Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment Style (5-15%) - develops when parents are inconsistently available to their children and when they are available, they're often preoccupied and un-attuned to their children's needs.

## **Parents who create an anxious-ambivalent attachment:**

- Are unpredictable and inconsistent in their emotional availability
- Are out of sync with their children's needs
- Vacillate between being attuned and being emotionally unavailable
- Are often preoccupied by their own emotions
- Can be overprotective
- Tend to live vicariously through their children
- Tend to have poor boundaries
- Gives their child the message, "I can't handle you"

## **Children with an anxious-ambivalent attachment:**

- Become hyper attuned to signs of connection and abandonment
- Are highly sensitive to others' emotions and moods
- Have poor self-reflection (are too "other focused")
- Feel unwanted and have high levels of shame
- Are at higher risk for anxiety disorders
- Are clingy

## **Children with an anxious-ambivalent attachment grow into adults who:**

- Are prone to mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders, addictions
- Have poor self-regulation
- Have difficulty recovering from traumatic events
- Crave predictability
- Are quick to feel neglected and unwanted in their relationships
- Are prone to anger when needs aren't met
- Have a deep need to be seen and validated
- Crave intimacy but have an intense fear of being hurt and/or abandoned
- Set the emotional climate in their relationships
- Have a strong need to feel special

Disorganized Attachment (20-40%)- Develops when a child is the victim of abuse, has psychologically disturbed parents and/or parents with substance abuse issues. The parents, who are supposed to be the source of safety and comfort, instead become a source of fear, leaving the child confused and disorganized.

## **Parents who create a disorganized attachment:**

- Often struggle with addictions and/or mental illnesses
- Were often victims of abuse and/or trauma
- Often have a family legacy of unresolved trauma

## **Children with a disorganized attachment:**

- May have developmental delays
- Often have "failure to thrive"
- Have behavioral difficulties- aggressive or withdrawn
- Often dissociate- "go someplace else"
- Have high levels of anxiety
- Have a fragmented sense of self

## **Children with a disorganized attachment grow into adults:**

- Exhibit erratic behavior in relationships
- Have higher rates of depression, anxiety and addictions
- Have higher rates of aggressive, violent and controlling behaviors
- Are prone to continue the pattern of abuse with their own children
- Are detached from their emotions
- Have a need for intensity- feel agitated when things are peaceful
- Need to be in charge