

Attachment for Beginners

Secure Attachment (The Well Adjusted Guy)

- I. Internal Experience (Description from David Wallin): It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
- II. Others' experience:
 - a. He is calm when he is at rest.
 - b. When he is active, he is engaged and present.
- III. Where it comes from: Consistently emotionally available primary attachment figures -
 - a. Primary attachment figures respond to needs with attention, affection, and approval
 - b. Message: if you ask for them you will get them
 - c. I can express my needs directly
- IV. Shame is rare; Pride is hidden
- V. Vulnerability: Complacency
- VI. This describes me (scale 0-10)

Disorganized/Unresolved Attachment (The Basket Case)

- I. Internal Experience (Description by David Wallin): I am uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
- II. Others' experience:
 - a. He is suspicious or completely zoned out at rest.
 - b. When he is active, he is anxious, demanding, and manipulative.
- III. Where it comes from: Scary primary attachment figures -
 - a. they respond to needs with dissociation, fright, and aggression
 - b. Message: if you express need, you will be hurt
 - c. I have to get my needs met covertly
- IV. Shame and pride are both overt
 - a. Common shame – "I am needy" or "I am too much"
 - b. Common pride – "I will do whatever I want."
 - c. Often combine into "I hate you/ don't leave me."
- V. In Recovery
 - a. At their best they have genuine humility
 - b. Primary defense – splitting people into all good or all bad categories
 - c. Personal resources – usually low
 - d. Motivation for change – usually high
 - e. Willingness to see his role in the problem – usually high
 - f. Willingness to take responsibility for the solution – usually low
 - g. Willingness to look at past trauma and neglect – very (sometimes too) high
- VI. This describes me (scale 0-10)

Anxious/Preoccupied Attachment (The Nice Guy)

- I. Internal Experience (Wallin): I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.
- II. Others' experience:
 - a. He is anxious or preoccupied when he is at rest.
 - b. When he is active, he is compliant, overly eager to please, and obsessive.
- III. Where it comes from: Inconsistently emotionally available attachment figures -
 - a. they respond to needs with a mix of attention and ignoring, affection and coldness, approval and disapproval.
 - b. Message: if you express a need, it will be met on the caregiver's terms.
 - c. Conclusion: I have to earn my needs being met. Be a friend to get a friend.

- IV. Shame is overt; Pride is covert
 - a. Common Shame – “I am bad ”or “I am a failure ”
 - b. Common Pride – “I am nice ”or “I am a good friend ”
- V. In Recovery
 - a. At their best they have genuine compassion
 - b. Primary defense: Transference of past rejecters onto present relationships
 - c. Personal resources –usually higher than they think
 - d. Motivation for change –usually high
 - e. Willingness to see his role in the problem –usually high
 - f. Willingness to take responsibility for the solution –usually high
 - g. Willingness to look at past trauma and neglect –Low –he wants to blame himself
- VI. This describes me (Scale 0-10)

Avoidant/Dismissive Attachment (The Self-Sufficient Guy)

- I. Internal Experience (Wallin): I am comfortable without close relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.
- II. Others' experience:
 - a. He is cold and aloof when he is at rest.
 - b. When he is active, he is controlling and dismissive.
- III. Where it comes from: Primary attachment figures were consistently emotionally unavailable –
 - a. they respond to needs with ignoring, carelessness, and disapproval.
 - b. Message: if you express a need, it won't be met
 - c. Conclusion: I have to meet my own needs
- IV. Shame is covert; pride is overt
 - a. Common shame – “I am weak ”or “I am not enough ”
 - b. Common pride – “I am strong ”or “I can take care of myself ”
- V. In Recovery
 - a. At their best they have a strong sense of justice
 - b. Projection of rejected parts of self onto others
 - c. Personal resources –usually lower than they think
 - d. Motivation for change –usually low
 - e. Willingness to see his role in the problem –usually low
 - f. Willingness to take responsibility for the solution –usually high
 - g. Willingness to look at past trauma and neglect –Low –What's the point?
- II. This describes me (Scale 0-10)