

# How to use attachment styles to build better relationships

Attachment styles describe how we think, feel and behave in our relationships with other people. Researchers commonly describe four styles: *secure, anxious, dismissive-avoidant and fearful-avoidant*.

Understanding your own style can help you notice how you show up at work and adapt your behaviour when it matters. Spotting the style of people you work with, particularly a manager, can also help you respond in ways that build stronger, more effective working relationships.



Deeper Dive

## AI prompt to find your attachment style

*"Using John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth's work on attachment styles - ask me 5 questions to identify my attachment style at work."*

## Adapting to different attachment styles

### Secure

Comfortable with collaboration. Build trust easily and learn quickly.

But might overlook the need for reassurance.

**If this is you:** Share your thinking out loud, and ask for help and feedback. It creates space for others to do the same.

**If this is your manager:** Ask for their perspective. Secure managers are usually open to sharing experience and ideas.

### Anxious

Conscientious and responsive. Care about how others think and feel.

But might worry and need more reassurance.

**If this is you:** In a hard moment, ask yourself: *"On a scale of 1-10, how did that go?"* Then ask someone you trust for their view to create balance.

**If this is your manager:** Ask what information would be helpful and share updates so they feel informed about progress.

### Avoidant dismissive

Independent and self-sufficient. Prefer to work things out alone.

But might avoid collaboration or involving others.

**If this is you:** Share your first thoughts to involve others. Build a habit of asking: *"Here are my halfway thoughts - what would you do to make this better?"*

**If this is your manager:** Don't make involvement feel like an energy drain. Agree quick check-ins at key points in a project.

### Avoidant fearful

Perceptive and aware of dynamics. Good at reading a room.

But might react strongly to criticism and avoid engaging.

**If this is you:** Look for the say / do moments - notice when people do what they say they will to build trust over time.

**If this is your manager:** Be open about what's not working. Ask: *"I've been reflecting on some Even Better Ifs. What have I missed?"*