



Healthy Attachments Workbook 2025

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Introduction

This document has been developed by NICRO at the request of our beneficiaries. It is being made available to the general public as part of our crime and violence prevention service. Individuals and organisations may make use of this document for non-profit and educational purposes.

This reader contains explanatory notes, examples and educational content, as well as guidance and advice.

The goal of this reader is to provide educational information on healthy attachments in relationships, so that affected people can make more informed choices about their current and future situations.

This reader can also be used on conjunction with the following readers and workbooks, available from NICRO Resources page on our website.

- Peer Pressure Workbooks for Teens
- Managing Difficult People Guide
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Co-Parenting Workbook
- Toxic Relationships Reader

What is Attachment

In psychology, attachment refer to emotional bonds or connections that people form with others, especially in early childhood. The term was popularized by John Bowlby, and Mary Ainsworth who studied how infants form attachments to their caregivers. These emotional bonds are important for social and emotional development.

How are Attachments Formed

Psychological attachments, particularly those between infants and their caregivers, are formed through a complex interplay of biological, emotional, and social factors. The process of attachment formation is fundamental to a child's development and sets the foundation for how they will form relationships throughout their lives.

The two main researchers on the topic of attachments are John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth.

- **Innate Biological Drive**
 - Attachment is an innate biological drive.
 - Just as infants are born with the ability to breathe, eat, and move, they are also born with an instinct to form emotional bonds with their caregivers.
 - This drive helps ensure that infants stay close to their caregivers, which is vital for their survival and safety.

- **Early Interaction with Caregivers**

- Attachment is formed through the infant's early interactions with their primary caregivers (usually parents).
- Babies begin to recognize their caregivers' faces, voices, and smells, and they form a sense of trust and security when their caregivers consistently meet their physical and emotional needs.
- These interactions are often subtle, like the baby looking at the caregiver, smiling, crying for attention, or reaching out to be held.
- The caregiver's response to these signals (such as picking up the baby when it cries) helps the infant feel safe and secure, which reinforces the bond.

Phases of Attachment Development

Bowlby outlined stages in the development of attachment:

- **Pre-attachment (Birth to 6 weeks)**

- In this stage, infants show little preference for specific caregivers.
- They might respond to anyone who provides care, but they haven't formed a strong bond yet.

- **Attachment-in-the-making (6 weeks to 6-8 months)**

- During this phase, babies begin to show a preference for specific caregivers.
- They start to recognize their primary caregiver's face and voice, but they are still open to others and will accept care from strangers.

- **Clear-cut Attachment (6-8 months to 18-24 months)**

- This is when a true attachment forms.
- The infant becomes more visibly attached to their primary caregiver(s), showing separation anxiety when the caregiver leaves and joy when they return.
- Babies at this stage seek comfort and security from their attachment figure and prefer them over others.

- **Formation of Reciprocal Relationships (18 months and beyond)**

- As the child grows older, they develop more independence and begin to understand the caregiver's needs.
- At this stage, the child starts to show more flexibility in their attachment, such as understanding that their caregiver will return even if they are temporarily absent.
- They also begin to form relationships with others, though the primary caregiver remains central.

The Role of the Primary Caregiver

The key to forming a healthy attachment is the caregiver's ability to respond appropriately and consistently to the child's needs. This doesn't mean that caregivers have to be perfect, but it does mean that the child feels consistently cared for, supported, and emotionally understood.

Sensitive and responsive caregiving (noticing when the child is hungry, tired, or upset and responding promptly) fosters a secure attachment.

Inconsistent or neglectful caregiving can lead to insecure attachments, where the child may not feel safe or supported.

Internal Working Models

- If a child learns early on that people are generally **reliable and responsive**, they grow up believing relationships are safe and worthwhile.
- If they learn the opposite—that people are **unavailable, inconsistent, or threatening**—they adapt by avoiding closeness, becoming overly clingy, or showing fear-based behaviours.
- In short, **attachments are the internal working models** we build to navigate connection and closeness with others.
- They dictate how we **trust, depend, and relate**—or struggle to do so.

Why Are Attachments Important For Our Behaviour

Secure attachments form the foundation for **psychological stability, emotional regulation**, and **healthy interpersonal functioning** across the lifespan.

In practical terms, secure attachment isn't just "nice to have"—it is **core to functional living**. Individuals without it often cycle through unstable relationships, mental health struggles, and professional friction until the underlying patterns are addressed, often through therapy.

- **Emotional Regulation:** Securely attached individuals manage stress and emotions more effectively. They're less prone to anxiety and depression.
- **Relationship Functionality:** They establish healthier, more stable relationships. They trust others without being overly dependent or distant.
- **Resilience:** Better equipped to handle life's challenges and bounce back from setbacks.
- **Communication:** Open, assertive communication skills; less prone to misinterpretation or defensiveness.
- **Leadership & Collaboration:** In professional settings, secure individuals are more adaptive, trustworthy, and constructive in group dynamics.

What Are The Different Attachment Styles:

There are four **main attachment styles**.



What the Different Attachment Styles Look Like in Children

Attachment Style	How It's Formed	In Children	Parent Example
Secure	Caregivers are responsive, warm, and consistently available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child is confident exploring, seeks comfort from caregiver, calms easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child seeks comfort and is soothed easily after stress or separation.
Anxious (Preoccupied)	Caregivers are inconsistently responsive—sometimes loving, sometimes unavailable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clingy, anxious when separated, difficult to soothe even when caregiver returns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks constant reassurance, worries parent doesn't love them enough.
Avoidant (Dismissive)	Caregivers are emotionally distant or unresponsive; child learns not to depend on others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appears independent. Avoids seeking comfort even when upset. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't seek parent for comfort. Appears emotionally shut down.
Disorganized (Fearful-Avoidant)	Caregivers are abusive, frightening, or severely neglectful; child experiences fear with no safe source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confused behaviour. May approach but then avoid caregiver. Fear-based reactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approaches parent but quickly withdraws. May freeze or dissociate.

What the Different Attachment Styles Look Like in Adults

Attachment Style	How It's Formed	In Adults
Secure	Caregivers are responsive, warm, and consistently available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comfortable with intimacy and independence. Communicates needs clearly.
Anxious (Preoccupied)	Caregivers are inconsistently responsive—sometimes loving, sometimes unavailable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Craves closeness Fears abandonment. Overly sensitive to partner's cues.
Avoidant (Dismissive)	Caregivers are emotionally distant or unresponsive; child learns not to depend on others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotionally distant. Avoids intimacy. Values independence over connection.
Disorganized (Fearful-Avoidant)	Caregivers are abusive, frightening, or severely neglectful; child experiences fear with no safe source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desires closeness but fears it. Internal conflict, unpredictable responses.

Moving Towards A Secure Attachment Style

Below is a structured, practical guide for individuals seeking to move toward a **secure attachment style**, based on their current pattern—**anxious**, **avoidant**, or **disorganized**.

Each section includes **clear, actionable steps**, grounded in evidence-based practices from attachment theory and clinical psychology. It will be best for you to first form an idea of what your attachment style may be through therapy, research or evidenced based quizzes.

General Foundation: Core Practices for All Styles

Before diving into style-specific steps, all individuals should build the following **foundational habits**:

1. **Develop Self-Awareness**
 - Journal regularly about your emotional reactions in relationships.
 - Track triggers: "What made me feel unsafe, clingy, avoidant, or confused?"
2. **Practice Emotional Regulation**
 - Use grounding techniques (breathing, mindfulness) to stay present.
 - Learn to **name** emotions instead of reacting impulsively.
3. **Seek Secure Role Models**
 - Observe or interact with people who exhibit secure behaviours.
 - Internalize their calm, boundaries, and communication.
4. **Engage in Therapy (If Possible)**
 - Especially effective: **Attachment-Based Therapy**, **Schema Therapy**, or **EMDR** for trauma-related patterns.

For Anxious (Preoccupied) Attachment

Common Traits:

- Fear of abandonment
- Clinginess, need for reassurance
- Emotional highs and lows in relationships

Structured Steps:

1. **Pause Before Reacting**
 - Use the 24-hour rule before sending emotional texts or confronting a partner.
2. **Build Internal Reassurance**
 - Create and repeat affirmations: "*I am enough, even when I feel unsure.*"
 - Learn to self-soothe with calming routines, not people.
3. **Set Balanced Boundaries**
 - Stop over-disclosing or over-accommodating early in relationships.
 - Practice saying no without guilt.
4. **Delay Interpretation**
 - If someone is slow to reply, **don't assume rejection**—wait and verify facts.
5. **Choose Available Partners**
 - Stop pursuing emotionally unavailable people. Recognize attraction to chaos as a sign to pause.

For Avoidant (Dismissive) Attachment

Common Traits:

- Discomfort with closeness
- Overemphasis on independence
- Shutting down emotionally

Structured Steps:

1. **Recognize Emotional Suppression**
 - Track how often you withdraw or change the subject when things get vulnerable.
 - Ask: "What emotion am I avoiding right now?"
2. **Practice Gradual Vulnerability**
 - Share small personal thoughts intentionally in safe relationships.
 - Tolerate the discomfort rather than avoiding it.
3. **Let People In—Deliberately**
 - Say "yes" to connection even when it feels unnecessary.
 - Example: Text a friend back without delay; accept invitations.
4. **Challenge the Independence Myth**
 - Reflect on how total independence may protect you but also isolates you.
 - Work toward **interdependence**, not dependence.
5. **Explore Childhood Messages**
 - Journal: "What did I learn about asking for help or expressing needs growing up?"
 - Reframe those beliefs.

For Disorganized (Fearful-Avoidant) Attachment

Common Traits:

- Craves connection but fears it
- Trauma history or chaotic caregiving
- Trust issues, emotional volatility

Structured Steps:

1. **Focus on Safety First**
 - If trauma is present, **trauma therapy (e.g., EMDR, somatic experiencing)** is essential.
 - Avoid high-conflict or triggering relationships while healing.
2. **Track Push-Pull Patterns**
 - Journal your responses: "When do I get close and then sabotage?"
 - Learn your "exit strategies" (e.g., ghosting, nitpicking, withdrawal).
3. **Separate the Past from the Present**
 - Identify triggers that are based in old trauma, not current danger.
 - Use grounding statements: "*This is a new relationship. I am not back there.*"
4. **Practice Slow Trust-Building**
 - Don't rush intimacy. Test reliability slowly and consistently.
 - Observe others' behaviour over time instead of relying on hope or fear.
5. **Develop a Coherent Narrative**

- Work on creating a cohesive story of your past (often in therapy).
- This is key to forming a secure base in your sense of self.

Maintenance: Long-Term Secure Attachment Behaviours

- **Clear Communication:** Express needs calmly and directly.
- **Boundaries + Empathy:** Balance between protecting yourself and staying emotionally connected.
- **Responsiveness:** Show up for others and expect the same.
- **Repair:** When rupture happens in relationships, work toward honest repair—not blame or retreat.
- **Reflection:** Periodically assess your growth and adjust as needed.

Alternatives Ways of Responding

Here are some common phrases that reflect each of the four main attachment styles—anxious, avoidant, disorganized, and secure—along with healthier alternatives that reflect a secure attachment style.

1. Anxious Attachment

Common Phrases:

- “Why didn’t you text me back right away?”
- “Do you still love me?”
- “I just need to know we’re okay.”
- “I feel like you’re pulling away.”
- “If you leave me, I won’t be okay.”

Secure Alternatives:

- “I noticed I felt anxious when I didn’t hear back—can we talk about that?”
- “I know you care about me, but I need a little reassurance right now.”
- “I value feeling close—can we find a way to connect more regularly?”
- “I trust that we’re okay, but I want to check in with you.”
- “I know I can handle things even if they get hard, but I hope we can work through them together.”

2. Avoidant Attachment

Common Phrases:

- “I don’t need anyone.”
- “I’m fine on my own.”
- “This is getting too intense.”
- “Why do we need to talk about feelings?”
- “I need space. A lot of it.”

Secure Alternatives:

- “I value my independence, but I also want to stay connected with you.”
- “Sometimes I need space to recharge—it’s not about you.”
- “This feels intense, and I’d like to talk about it when I’ve had a moment.”

- "Talking about feelings is uncomfortable for me, but I know it's important for our relationship."
- "I need some time, but I'll check in with you soon."

3. Disorganized (Fearful-Avoidant) Attachment

Common Phrases:

- "I want to be close, but I'm scared you'll hurt me."
- "I don't know if I can trust you—or anyone."
- "Please don't leave me, but also don't get too close."
- "I can't handle this. I'm done."
- "I feel like I'm too much."

Secure Alternatives:

- "I want connection, but I'm working through fears from the past."
- "Trust is hard for me, but I want to build it with you."
- "I notice I pull back sometimes when I'm afraid—can we talk about that?"
- "I feel overwhelmed, but I want to try and stay present."
- "I've felt like too much before, but I'm learning I deserve healthy love."

4. Secure Attachment

Common Secure Phrases:

- "I trust you."
- "I feel safe sharing this with you."
- "I know we can work through this."
- "It's okay to take space, and I'm still here."
- "I'm here for you, and I know you're here for me."

These serve as **goals** or **anchors** for anyone working toward secure relating.

Guidance for the Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment Style

These notes are for people who want to develop secure attachment behaviours across four key relationship domains: Family, Work, Friendships, and Romantic Relationships.

Core traits:

- Intense fear of abandonment
- Hyperfocus on others' moods or reactions
- Difficulty feeling secure without constant reassurance
- Over-personalizing perceived distance or disconnection

Secure goal: Develop self-trust, emotional regulation, and mutual boundaries—without over-functioning or over-attaching.

Family Relationships

Challenges:

- Feeling overly responsible for family members' moods or needs
- Seeking validation through over-giving
- Reacting strongly to perceived rejection or emotional distance

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Stop Managing Other People's Emotions

- Notice when you're trying to "fix" someone else's feelings or keep the peace at your expense.

Replace with: "I can care without controlling. Their discomfort isn't my failure."

Step 2: Set and Maintain Boundaries

- Practice saying no without guilt.
- Limit time in emotionally draining dynamics.

Example: "I'm not available to talk right now, but I care. Let's check in later."

Step 3: Watch for Role Reversals

- If you parent your parents or siblings, that's not emotional safety—it's emotional enmeshment.

Reflect: "Am I being a partner or a child here? Is this dynamic balanced?"

Step 4: Don't Chase Repair Immediately

- Let family members take responsibility for repairing ruptures too.

Secure behaviour: Giving space instead of demanding instant harmony.

Work Relationships

Challenges:

- Over-apologizing or over-explaining
- Taking feedback personally
- Fear of disapproval from managers or colleagues
- Overextending yourself to gain approval

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Validate Yourself First

- Before seeking approval, ask: "Is this good enough by *my* standards?"
- Secure affirmation: "I did well. I don't need external praise to confirm that."

Step 2: Manage Email/Message Anxiety

- Resist the urge to re-read or over-analyse others' tones or delays.
- Secure practice: Read once, assume good intent, respond clearly.

Step 3: Boundaries with People-Pleasing

- Don't volunteer for extra work to feel valued.
- Ask: "Is this sustainable or am I sacrificing my needs to feel safe?"

Step 4: Learn to Receive Neutral or Negative Feedback

- Practice saying: "Thank you. I'll consider that." (No need to over-apologize.)

Friendships

Challenges:

- Feeling hurt if friends don't initiate or respond quickly
- Over-texting or over-communicating to feel connected
- Fearing being left out or replaced

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Diversify Emotional Support

- Avoid making one person your entire support system.
- Secure principle: "Connection is stronger when it's not desperate."

Step 2: Clarify Social Expectations

- If you're unsure about frequency of contact, ask.
- Secure phrase: "I value our friendship—what works best for staying in touch?"

Step 3: Don't Interpret Absence as Rejection

- When a friend is less responsive, don't catastrophize.
- Practice: "They're likely busy, not abandoning me."

Step 4: Let Friendships Breathe

- Don't over-function or initiate constantly. Let others show up too.
- Secure mindset: "It's okay to let others come toward me."

Romantic Relationships

Challenges:

- Needing constant reassurance
- Clinging or escalating during conflict
- Overinterpreting emotional distance
- Fearing abandonment during even small disconnects

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Regulate Before Reacting

- Don't send anxious texts or make emotional demands in the heat of fear.

Practice: Pause. Ground yourself. Reconnect to your calm self before responding.

Step 2: Ask Directly, Don't Test

- Don't use silence, passive-aggression, or guilt to test their love.

Secure statement: "I'm feeling a little unsure today—can we talk about how we're doing?"

Step 3: Reassure Yourself Internally

- Practice self-soothing routines instead of external reassurance seeking.

Affirm: "I am safe even if I feel insecure. I don't need immediate validation to be okay."

Step 4: Accept Healthy Space

- Closeness doesn't require constant contact.

Secure belief: "A secure bond allows for space without fear."

Step 5: Choose Emotionally Available Partners

- Stop pursuing relationships that mirror early attachment wounds (hot/cold, emotionally withholding).

Secure filter: Consistency > Intensity

FINAL PRACTICES ACROSS ALL CONTEXTS

Practice	What It Does
Daily check-in journal	Tracks triggers and progress toward secure behaviour
Emotional labelling	Builds emotional regulation (e.g., "I feel anxious, not unloved.")
Assertive communication	Strengthens self-worth and reduces emotional dependency
Reframe thoughts	Replaces catastrophizing with balanced narratives
Therapy (e.g., CBT, IFS, or attachment-based)	Unpacks root causes and rewires relationship patterns

Guidance for the Avoidant-Dismissive Attachment Style

Avoidant strategies are **protective**, not malicious. They were often developed in environments where vulnerability felt unsafe or ignored. Moving toward secure attachment isn't about becoming someone else—it's about **becoming a more integrated, emotionally available version of yourself**, one step at a time.

Core traits:

- Highly values independence and self-sufficiency
- Struggles to rely on others or be emotionally vulnerable
- Shuts down or distances self when emotions intensify
- Avoids conflict, intimacy, and dependency

Secure goal: Learn to **tolerate closeness, express emotional needs**, and build **mutual interdependence** without feeling engulfed or controlled.

Family Relationships

Challenges:

- Emotional withdrawal or shutting down during conflict
- Avoidance of deep conversations or family vulnerability
- Irritation with perceived "neediness" of relatives

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Acknowledge the Protective Wall

- Identify when you emotionally shut down, detach, or "go cold."
- Phrase: "I feel myself pulling away—what am I trying to avoid?"

Step 2: Practice Low-Stakes Vulnerability

- Share minor emotional truths (e.g., "That was hard for me," "I felt overwhelmed").
- Start with safer family members—don't go straight into high-conflict zones.

Step 3: Schedule (Not Avoid) Connection

- Intentionally set time for phone calls, visits, or text check-ins. Don't wait to "feel like it."
- Phrase: "I care about you. I know I don't always show it, but I'm working on that."

Step 4: Challenge the "Neediness" Narrative

- Reframe: "Needing others doesn't make them weak—and relying on others doesn't make me vulnerable to control."

Work Relationships

Challenges:

- Prefers solo work or task-based interactions

- Struggles with team dependency or collaborative vulnerability
- Resents micromanagement or emotional feedback

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Practice Controlled Disclosure

Action: Let colleagues in on your experience—without oversharing.

Example: “This project’s been tough, but I’m figuring it out.” (Humanizes without exposure.)

Step 2: Tolerate Mutual Dependence

Action: Lean into delegating or receiving help, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Phrase: “I usually do this alone, but I think your input will improve it.”

Step 3: Respond, Don’t Withdraw

When receiving feedback or criticism, resist the urge to emotionally disengage.

Phrase: “I need a moment to process, but I hear what you’re saying.”

Step 4: Maintain Emotional Neutrality Without Numbing

Practice regulating discomfort rather than dismissing it.

Tip: Use breathwork or grounding to stay present in interpersonal tension.

Friendships

Challenges:

- Keeps friends at a distance emotionally
- Prefers casual over intimate friendships
- Distrusts or disengages when people want “too much” closeness

Secure Attachment Steps:

Step 1: Identify Safe Friends for Emotional Practice

Start with those who are emotionally consistent and not intrusive.

Goal: Build trust incrementally.

Step 2: Offer Support Without Fixing or Avoiding

Action: Be present during their emotional moments without disappearing or intellectualizing.

Phrase: “I’m not always great at this, but I’m here for you.”

Step 3: Initiate Contact

Don’t wait until you’re “ready” or until they reach out.

Practice sending a check-in text, setting up a lunch, or asking a deeper question.

Step 4: Allow Discomfort Without Disengaging

Expect that opening up may feel awkward. That doesn’t mean something’s wrong.

Mantra: “I can survive intimacy. It’s okay to stay present even if it feels vulnerable.”

Romantic Relationships

Challenges:

- Prioritizes autonomy over intimacy
- Avoids conflict or emotional expression
- Feels “trapped” or suffocated in closeness
- May idealize independence and devalue emotional needs (theirs and others')

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Communicate Boundaries—Without Emotional Withholding

Avoidance often masks fear. Learn to voice your needs clearly.

Phrase: “I need some space to recharge—not because I’m disconnecting, but because that helps me show up better.”

Step 2: Sit With Emotional Intimacy

Don’t flee when emotional closeness deepens.

Stay in the room—even when tempted to distract, fix, or detach.

Step 3: Take Risks in Expressing Emotion

Say “I miss you,” or “That hurt me,” even if it feels unnatural.

Remember: Vulnerability builds trust.

Step 4: Reframe Closeness as Strength, Not Threat

Secure mantra: “Being seen doesn’t mean losing control. It means I’m brave enough to be real.”

Step 5: Choose Secure, Emotionally Mature Partners

Avoid chasing emotionally unavailable people just to maintain distance. Choose someone who values intimacy, direct communication, and emotional steadiness.

CORE PRACTICES ACROSS ALL DOMAINS

Practice	How It Helps
Emotional labelling	Builds self-awareness of withdrawal triggers
Scheduled connection rituals	Prevents unconscious emotional distancing
Somatic grounding (e.g., breath, posture)	Reduces shutdown during high-emotion moments
Journal prompts (e.g., “What am I avoiding?”)	Surfaces unconscious fears or beliefs
Therapy focused on attachment/relational trauma	Unwinds fear of dependence and helps integrate emotional expression

Guidance for the Disorganised-Fearful Attachment Style

Disorganized attachment is often rooted in **early relational trauma**, so healing takes time, patience, and consistent safety. You're not broken—you were shaped by unpredictable love. But with structured effort and supportive relationships, **you can build secure, steady, and trustworthy bonds** without sacrificing your safety.

Core traits:

- Deep fear of both intimacy and abandonment
- Push-pull dynamics: craving closeness but distrusting it
- Emotional volatility and confusion in relationships
- Rooted in trauma, neglect, or inconsistent caregiving

Secure goal: Develop **emotional safety, self-trust**, and **stable relational expectations**, learning to **regulate fear without avoiding or clinging**.

Family Relationships

Challenges:

- Feeling triggered or retraumatized around caregivers
- Confusion between love and fear
- Cycles of avoidance, compliance, or emotional outbursts

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Recognize Your Triggers

Action: Track specific words, tones, or situations that spike fear or dissociation in family settings.

Phrase: "When my parent criticizes me, I freeze—I need to ground myself."

Step 2: Set Psychological and Physical Boundaries

Tip: You can love family *without* giving them unlimited access.

Examples:

- Limit visits or calls
- Decline emotionally unsafe conversations
- Prepare exit plans for high-stress events

Step 3: Practice Safety, Not Performance

Action: Refuse to play peacekeeper, fixer, or emotional sponge.

Secure phrase: "I care about you, but I'm no longer available for that role."

Step 4: Create a Chosen Family Network

You may need to seek secure connections outside your biological family to begin practicing new relational norms.

Work Relationships

Challenges:

- Hypervigilance about rejection or criticism
- Difficulty trusting authority figures
- Erratic boundaries—too open or too shut down

- Fear of visibility or being “found out”

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Normalize Feedback and Structure

Practice reframing neutral feedback as a growth tool—not a personal attack.

Mantra: “Feedback is information, not proof of failure.”

Step 2: Establish Predictable Routines

Routines build internal safety and reduce chaos-driven reactivity.

Examples:

- Consistent start/end times
- Structured work plans
- Scheduled breaks to self-regulate

Step 3: Keep Boundaries Consistent

Don’t over disclose or seek emotional intimacy from unsafe colleagues.

Secure behaviour: Maintain professionalism, assert your workload limits, and avoid gossip or emotional enmeshment.

Step 4: Build One or Two Safe Work Relationships

Practice letting one trusted colleague in. Share small vulnerabilities over time.

Phrase: “This week’s been rough. Thanks for checking in—I appreciate it.”

Friendships

Challenges:

- Fearful of closeness but devastated by distance
- Suspicion of others’ motives
- Intense emotional responses to minor perceived slights
- Testing behaviours (e.g., pushing friends away to see if they return)

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Identify Safe, Consistent Friends

Avoid chaotic or emotionally volatile people. Look for friends who:

- Follow through
- Apologize when needed
- Accept your limits

Step 2: Share Gradually, Not All at Once

Secure connection builds over time.

Tip: Begin with light truths or requests and see how they respond.

Step 3: Interrupt the Push-Pull Dynamic

When you want to pull away or lash out, pause.

Practice: “What am I afraid of right now—abandonment or intimacy?”

Step 4: Repair Instead of Disappearing

If you overreact, return and name it.

Phrase: "I got overwhelmed and panicked. I'm learning to manage that better."

Romantic Relationships

Challenges:

- Craving closeness, but distrusting partners' intentions
- Sabotaging stable partners, chasing emotionally unavailable ones
- Intense jealousy, control issues, or shutdowns
- Unresolved trauma being projected onto the relationship

Secure Steps:

Step 1: Choose Safe, Emotionally Available Partners

Avoid intense, unpredictable relationships that mirror early trauma.

Ask yourself: "Do I feel calm with them—or always on edge?"

Step 2: State Emotional Needs Directly

Replace withdrawal or explosions with clarity.

Phrase: "I need reassurance, but I'm scared to ask. Can we talk through this?"

Step 3: Create Emotional Check-In Rituals

Schedule time to connect emotionally, especially when things feel "off."

Keeps connection steady instead of crisis-driven.

Step 4: Work With Your Body to Regulate Fear

When triggered, use grounding exercises before responding:

- 4-7-8 breathing
- Touch a textured object
- Say: "I am safe now. This is not the past."

Step 5: Don't Confuse Intensity With Intimacy

Secure belief: "Calm and consistent is love, not boring."

CORE PRACTICES ACROSS ALL RELATIONSHIP DOMAINS

Practice	Function
Daily emotional tracking	Builds emotional literacy and identifies fear-based patterns
Trauma-informed therapy (e.g., EMDR, IFS, Somatic Experiencing)	Processes core wounds that drive disorganized behaviour
Self-soothing rituals	Replaces crisis-driven connection with inner stability
Secure role models (books, podcasts, support groups)	Rewires expectations of what safe relationships look and feel like
Affirmations like: "I can be close and still be safe."	Reframes intimacy as strength

Identifying Triggering Toxic Behaviours in Others

Below is a **practical table** designed to help individuals with different **insecure attachment styles** identify **toxic behaviours in others** that may act as **triggers** for their specific attachment wounds. Recognizing these patterns can support emotional regulation and healthy boundary-setting.

Attachment Style	Toxic Behaviours in Others That May Trigger You	Why It Triggers You	Secure Response to Practice
Anxious-Preoccupied (<i>Fears abandonment, seeks constant closeness</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotional unavailability Inconsistent communication Ghosting or breadcrumbing Withholding affection Hot-and-cold behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforces fear of being unwanted, rejected, or "too much" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say: "I need consistent communication to feel safe." Set limits with inconsistent people instead of chasing them. Focus on self-soothing when contact is delayed.
Avoidant-Dismissive (<i>Fears dependence, avoids closeness</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinginess or emotional enmeshment Over-sharing too quickly- Intrusive questioning Demands for constant emotional availability Guilt-tripping for space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feels engulfed, pressured, or emotionally invaded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say: "I care about you, and I need space to recharge." Set time-based limits on social engagement. Practice tolerating mild emotional discomfort without withdrawal.
Disorganized-Fearful (<i>Fears both closeness and abandonment</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sudden emotional shifts (love-bombing → devaluation)- Gaslighting or manipulation Intensity without consistency Threats of abandonment Passive-aggression or volatility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triggers fear of being hurt, trapped, or rejected—can't predict what's safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say: "I need emotional stability in relationships." Notice patterns, not promises. Ground yourself before reacting Use journaling or body awareness.

Tips for All Styles:

- **Notice your body:** racing heart, shutdown, or nausea may signal an attachment trigger.
- **Write it out:** "What just happened? What did it make me believe about myself?"
- **Trust consistent behaviour** over chemistry, intensity, or words.

Why Insecure Attachment Styles Seek Familiar Dysfunction

People with insecure attachment styles often unconsciously seek out relationships that **mirror early relational experiences**, even when those experiences were **painful or unsafe**.

The brain tends to equate "familiar" with "safe," even if that familiarity includes neglect, chaos, or emotional unavailability.

Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment

Core Belief: *"Love is inconsistent, and I must work hard to earn it."*

Who They're Drawn To:

- Emotionally unavailable partners
- People who give mixed signals or play "hot-and-cold"
- Individuals who avoid commitment

How This Reinforces Dysfunction:

- Confirms belief that they are "too much" or "not enough"
- Keeps them in a loop of proving worth and chasing closeness
- Triggers anxiety, over-functioning, and self-doubt

How to Break the Pattern:

Action	Why It Works
Pause before pursuing intensity	Intensity is often a trauma response, not genuine intimacy
Ask: "Do I feel calm or constantly activated around this person?"	Secure relationships feel steady, not anxious
Build emotional tolerance for stability	Practice accepting "boring" as "safe," not "unloving"
Seek out people who follow through	Value consistency over charm or chase

Avoidant-Dismissive Attachment

Core Belief: *"Depending on others makes me weak. Intimacy threatens my independence."*

Who They're Drawn To:

- Emotionally intense or needy partners (which confirms their fear of enmeshment)
- People who idolize them, but whom they eventually devalue
- Individuals who trigger their discomfort with closeness

How This Reinforces Dysfunction:

- Confirms belief that others are too demanding or suffocating
- Justifies emotional detachment or withdrawal
- Reinforces their lone-wolf narrative and blocks real intimacy

How to Break the Pattern:

Action	Why It Works
Notice when you're emotionally numbing or avoiding	Avoidance is a defence, not a personality trait
Choose partners who respect your boundaries but still show up	Helps you build trust in mutual autonomy
Practice naming emotions, even in small doses	Builds tolerance for vulnerability without overwhelm
Stop idealizing self-sufficiency as emotional maturity	True strength includes the ability to connect and depend safely

Disorganized-Fearful Attachment

Core Belief: *"Love is dangerous and unpredictable. People will hurt or abandon me."*

Who They're Drawn To:

- Emotionally volatile, controlling, or unavailable partners
- People who switch between idealization and devaluation
- Relationships that mimic trauma: intense, unstable, confusing

How This Reinforces Dysfunction:

- Keeps them locked in trauma reenactment cycles
- Confirms that love equals fear, chaos, or betrayal
- Prevents formation of internal safety and trust

How to Break the Pattern:

Action	Why It Works
Name the pattern: "This reminds me of what I knew growing up."	Awareness is the first step toward pattern disruption
Slow down early-stage connection	Gives time to assess actual safety and compatibility
Prioritize stability over intensity	Intensity often hides relational danger, not passion
Work with a trauma-informed therapist	Healing relational trauma requires more than insight—it requires regulation, safety, and repair practice

General Rule for All Styles:

- If the relationship feels familiar but emotionally unsafe, question it.

- If it feels steady, safe, and mildly uncomfortable at first—it might be secure.

Secure Relationship Reference Table

Below is a comprehensive reference table for individuals with insecure attachment styles, outlining what a secure, healthy relationship looks like across four major contexts: family, friendships, work, and romantic partners.

It details how people **treat each other**, how **problems are handled**, and what overall **relational dynamics** are typical in securely attached relationships.

Context	What It Looks Like Day-to-Day	How People Treat Each Other	How Problems Are Managed
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, respectful conversations • Emotional support without guilt • Time together feels safe, not pressured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect each other's autonomy • Validate feelings without dismissiveness • Encourage growth without control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems are named directly • Apologies are offered and accepted • Boundaries are respected during conflict
Friendships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual check-ins • Shared joy and support without dependence • Time apart is not a threat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindness without obligation • Space is given and respected • Differences are tolerated, not pathologized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts are discussed calmly • Ruptures are repaired, not avoided • No silent treatment or ghosting
Work Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear roles and expectations • Feedback is offered constructively • Boundaries between work and personal life are honoured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional respect regardless of rank • Accountability without shame • Encouragement over micromanagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues addressed with clarity and calm • Solutions are collaborative • No blame games or triangulation
Romantic Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and physical intimacy feels safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express needs directly and without punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss disagreements without threats or ultimatums

Context	What It Looks Like Day-to-Day	How People Treat Each Other	How Problems Are Managed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affection is consistent, not conditional Independence and togetherness are balanced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show affection freely Support each other's goals and identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict resolution is timely and fair Emotional safety is preserved during arguments

Notes for Individuals with Insecure Attachment:

- Consistency** is a hallmark of secure relationships—not intensity.
- Disagreement** is not rejection; how someone handles your vulnerability says more than how much they "love" you.
- If a relationship **requires you to abandon your needs, self-respect, or emotional well-being**, it is not secure—regardless of the label.
- Healthy relationships are **built, not found**. They grow through **shared accountability, safe conflict, and mutual care**.

Tips For Managing Insecurity In A Romantic Relationship That Leads To Jealousy And Lack Of Trust.

By applying these tips systematically, you can reduce insecurity's grip and foster a healthier, more trusting relationship.

- **Acknowledge Your Insecurity**
 - Recognize and accept that your feelings of insecurity are your responsibility.
 - Denying or ignoring them only allows them to fester and worsen.
- **Identify the Root Cause**
 - Reflect on why you feel insecure.
 - Is it past experiences, fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, or behaviour from your partner?
 - Understanding the cause is essential for addressing it effectively.
- **Communicate Clearly and Calmly**
 - Discuss your feelings with your partner without accusations or blame.
 - Use "I" statements to express how you feel and what triggers your jealousy, rather than attacking their character.
- **Set and Respect Boundaries**
 - Establish clear boundaries with your partner that address your insecurities constructively.
 - Ensure these boundaries are reasonable and mutually agreed upon to foster trust.
- **Focus on Building Self-Esteem**
 - Work on your confidence and self-worth independently of the relationship.
 - Engage in activities that affirm your value and develop your identity outside the partnership.
- **Avoid Assumptions and Jumping to Conclusions**
 - Don't let your mind fill gaps with worst-case scenarios.
 - Trust requires evidence, not speculation.
- **Practice Patience and Consistency**
 - Trust and security take time to build.
 - Consistent, reliable behaviour from both partners helps reduce anxiety and jealousy.
- **Consider Professional Help if Needed**
 - If insecurity and jealousy are severe or persistent, seek counselling.
 - Therapy can provide tools to manage emotions and improve relationship dynamics.
- **Limit Social Media and External Triggers**
 - Social media can amplify jealousy and insecurity.
 - Set limits on exposure if it contributes to negative feelings.
- **Focus on Facts, Not Fears**
 - Base your trust on your partner's actual behaviour, not your fears or what-ifs.
 - Keep a realistic perspective.

Tips For Managing Over Closeness In Friendships And Other New Relationships

These strategies help build **secure, sustainable relationships** without overwhelming yourself or others.

1. Recognize Your Patterns

- Reflect on moments when you feel compelled to share too much too soon or seek constant reassurance. Awareness is the first step to change.

2. Set Clear Personal Boundaries

- Decide what topics or personal information you are comfortable sharing early on. It's okay to hold back and reveal yourself gradually.

3. Pace the Relationship

- Allow relationships to develop naturally over time. Avoid rushing into intense emotional exchanges or frequent contact.

4. Maintain Your Own Life

- Keep up with your interests, hobbies, and other social connections. This balance prevents over-reliance on one person for emotional needs.

5. Practice Self-Soothing Techniques

- When you feel anxious about connection or fear rejection, use grounding strategies (deep breathing, mindfulness) instead of immediately reaching out.

6. Communicate Boundaries Clearly and Kindly

- If you feel overwhelmed or notice the other person pulling away, address it calmly: "I realize I've been sharing a lot quickly; I want to make sure we're comfortable with the pace."

7. Limit Frequency of Contact

- Avoid excessive texting or calls, especially early on. Schedule interactions thoughtfully to foster quality over quantity.

8. Ask Yourself: "Am I Seeking Connection or Reassurance?"

- This helps distinguish genuine bonding from anxiety-driven behaviours.

9. Seek Feedback

- If unsure, ask trusted friends for honest feedback about your behaviour in relationships.

10. Consider Professional Support if Needed

- Therapy can help explore the roots of over closeness and develop healthier interpersonal habits.

Tips for People Who Sabotage Relationships

If you tend to **sabotage relationships**—whether consciously or not—as part of unresolved attachment issues, it's critical to address the underlying fear, mistrust, or discomfort with intimacy driving the behaviour. Below are **practical, structured tips** for interrupting this pattern and moving toward healthier, more secure connections.

Sabotage is a defence, not a defect. You learned to protect yourself in ways that now harm your relationships—but with awareness and consistent effort, you can **unlearn the fear and build secure, resilient bonds**.

Tips for Overcoming Relationship Sabotage Driven by Attachment Issues

Identify Your Sabotage Patterns

Start by defining exactly *how* you sabotage:

- Picking fights during moments of closeness
- Ghosting or withdrawing without reason
- Becoming overly critical or emotionally unavailable
- Flirting with others to create distance
- Ending things “pre-emptively” to avoid being hurt

Action: Make a written list of specific behaviours you tend to engage in when things feel “too close” or emotionally risky.

Name the Emotion Beneath the Behaviour

Sabotage is often driven by hidden feelings like:

- Fear of abandonment or rejection (anxious)
- Fear of being controlled or engulfed (avoidant)
- Feeling unsafe due to past trauma (disorganized)

Action: When you feel the urge to sabotage, pause and ask: “*What am I feeling right now—vulnerable, afraid, mistrusting, ashamed?*” Naming the emotion disrupts automatic reactions.

Pause and Delay Reaction

When you feel triggered or panicked:

- **Don’t act immediately.** Give yourself 24 hours to respond or make a decision.
- Remind yourself: “*Urgency is not clarity.*”

Action: Use a journal or voice note app to express what you *want* to say or do—without actually doing it.

Separate the Present from the Past

Many sabotaging behaviours are protective strategies learned in earlier relationships (often in childhood).

Action: Ask yourself:

"Is this reaction about this person, or someone from my past?"

"Has this person actually betrayed me—or am I assuming they will?"

Practice Small Vulnerabilities

Start with low-stakes honesty:

- Admit when you feel scared or uncertain
- Share a need or boundary respectfully
- Express affection even if it feels risky

Action: Identify one area where you can be a little more open without overwhelming yourself.

Be Transparent with Trusted People

If you're in a relationship (friendship or romantic), name the pattern.

Example: "Sometimes I get scared and pull away. I'm working on it, and I want to be honest with you." This builds safety and accountability.

Develop Internal Safety

Self-soothing skills reduce the pressure to control others or escape.

- Mindfulness
- Breathwork
- Inner-child work
- Positive affirmations like:

"I can tolerate closeness. I am safe even when vulnerable."

Choose Relationships that Support Healing

Avoid emotionally unavailable, unpredictable, or chaotic partners.

- **Secure, consistent, respectful people** help reinforce healthy patterns.
- **Drama fuels sabotage**—stability creates change.

Track and Celebrate Small Wins

Notice when you *don't* sabotage:

- You voiced discomfort without pushing someone away.
- You stayed in connection despite fear.
- You returned after a rupture instead of disappearing.

Action: Log these moments. Evidence of growth builds trust in yourself.

Do the Deeper Work

Sabotaging is rarely a surface-level issue. It often involves trauma, betrayal, or emotional neglect.

Consider:

- **Attachment-focused therapy**
- **Trauma-informed modalities (e.g., EMDR, IFS)**
- **Group therapy** for relational practice

Worksheets

ASSESSING MY OWN ATTACHMENT STYLE

This worksheet is designed to help you better understand your **attachment style**—the way you typically relate to others in close relationships. Gaining insight into your attachment style is the first step toward building **healthier, more secure connections**.

Part 1: Quick Attachment Self-Assessment

Answer the following statements **honestly**, based on how you usually feel and behave in close relationships (romantic, family, close friends). Use the scale:

- **1 – Strongly Disagree**
- **2 – Disagree**
- **3 – Neutral / Sometimes**
- **4 – Agree**
- **5 – Strongly Agree**

#	Statement	Score (1-5)
1	I find it easy to trust people close to me.	
2	I worry a lot about being abandoned or rejected.	
3	I feel uncomfortable depending on others.	
4	I often seek reassurance from those close to me.	
5	I prefer not to show others how I feel deep down.	
6	I find it easy to get emotionally close to people.	
7	I often feel others don't want to be as close as I do.	
8	I try to avoid being too dependent on others.	
9	I feel confident that others will be there for me when I need them.	
10	I sometimes want closeness, but I also feel afraid of it.	

Part 2: Interpret Your Scores

Group the questions into categories. Total each category's score.

Secure Attachment

(Questions 1, 6, 9)

Total: ____

High scores (12–15): You likely have a secure attachment style.

Moderate scores (8–11): You may be mostly secure but have some tendencies to examine.

Anxious Attachment

(Questions 2, 4, 7)

Total: ____

High scores (12–15): You likely have an anxious (preoccupied) attachment style.

Moderate scores (8–11): Some anxious tendencies may influence your relationships.

Avoidant Attachment

(Questions 3, 5, 8)

Total: ____

High scores (12–15): You likely have an avoidant (dismissive) attachment style.

Moderate scores (8–11): You may have avoidant tendencies that limit intimacy.

Disorganized Attachment

(Question 10; also consider moderate-high scores in both Anxious and Avoidant)

Score: ____

A high score (4–5) here, especially combined with high anxious and avoidant scores, may suggest a **disorganized (fearful-avoidant)** attachment style.

Part 3: Reflective Questions

1. **Which attachment style best fits your experience, based on the results above?**

Write a few sentences to describe your style in your own words.

2. **How does this attachment style show up in your closest relationships (e.g., romantic, family, friends)?**

3. **What situations trigger you to feel insecure, avoidant, or overly dependent on others?**

4. **What would a “secure” relationship look and feel like to you? How is that different from your past or current patterns?**

Part 4: Next Steps

- Bring this worksheet to therapy or counselling if you're seeking professional guidance.
- Revisit this after learning more about attachment styles and doing emotional work.
- Consider journaling daily to track how your attachment behaviours show up and evolve.

No attachment style is fixed. With awareness and intentional effort, you can move toward a more secure and fulfilling way of relating.

DAILY ATTACHMENT STYLE CHALLENGES (10 DAYS EACH STYLE)

Here is a structured 30-day challenge broken down by attachment style—Anxious-Preoccupied, Avoidant-Dismissive, and Disorganized-Fearful—with one practical task per day to gradually develop more secure attachment behaviours.

Each task builds emotional resilience, self-awareness, and healthy relational habits.

Day	Anxious-Preoccupied (Over-seeks closeness, fears abandonment)	Avoidant-Dismissive (Fears dependence, avoids closeness)	Disorganized-Fearful (Fears both intimacy and abandonment)
1	Write down 3 people whose validation you overly seek	Identify 3 ways you disconnect emotionally in relationships	Journal: "When I get close to others, I start to feel..."
2	Go 4 waking hours without checking your phone/socials for reassurance	Spend 30 minutes with a trusted person without multitasking	Practice 5-5-5 breathing when emotionally overwhelmed
3	Ask yourself before texting: "Am I seeking safety or control?"	Text a friend first to initiate a hangout	Identify and write 3 triggers that cause push-pull behaviour
4	Set a boundary—even a small one—with someone today	Express one small emotional truth to someone (e.g., "I was nervous")	Say "I need a break to reset" when overstimulated emotionally
5	Delay responding to a text that gives you anxiety—wait 30 mins	Accept help from someone today, even if it feels uncomfortable	Draw a map of safe vs unsafe relationships from your past
6	List 5 things you like about yourself that aren't relationship-based	Write a gratitude note to someone you usually keep at arm's length	Identify your emotional response patterns (fight, flight, freeze, fawn)
7	Ask someone how they are without bringing up yourself	Say "I care about you" without minimizing it after	Write out your ideal version of a secure relationship
8	Spend one hour doing something alone without distraction	Reflect on how avoiding vulnerability has protected you—and limited you	Identify a "safe" person and tell them something small but true
9	Tell a friend or partner: "I was feeling anxious and wanted closeness"	Let someone know you're thinking about them (without reason)	Write a letter to a younger version of yourself offering safety
10	Don't contact a person you obsess over for the entire day	Share a personal memory with a colleague or acquaintance	When you feel the urge to withdraw or lash out—pause, name the feeling, and write it down

How to Use:

- Do **one task per day** based on your primary attachment pattern.
- You can repeat the cycle multiple times, mix challenges, or add journaling alongside.
- The goal is **not perfection**, but **pattern interruption**—gradually building new relational habits.

SECURE AT WORK – WORKSHEET PACK

These worksheets specifically address how attachment wounds can influence dynamics with **authority figures**, **peers**, and **feedback**, and how to shift toward secure patterns.

HANDLING AUTHORITY & POWER DYNAMICS

Objective: Understand reactions to authority and reframe power dynamics from threat to collaboration.

Sections:

- Scenario analysis:
 - “When my manager disagrees with me, I feel...”
 - “What do I assume about people in power?”
- Reframe guide:
 - “Instead of seeing authority as rejection/control, I can view it as...”
 - “What does a healthy relationship with leadership look like?”

Practical Tool:

- Scripts for professional assertion (e.g., “I hear your concerns—may I clarify my thinking?”)

AUTHORITY SCENARIO	MY USUAL RESPONSE	REFRAMED RESPONSE

CRITICISM WITHOUT COLLAPSE

Objective: Build capacity to receive feedback without personalizing or shutting down.

○

CRITICISM SCENARIO	MY USUAL RESPONSE	WHAT IS THE TRIGGER FOR ME	WHAT DO I FEEL	HOW DO I BEHAVE / REACT	MY REFRAMED RESPONSE
What I usually think and do when I get criticism...					<i>Instead of: "I messed everything up," Try: "I'm learning. What can I improve for next time?"</i>

Rewrite a recent criticism using secure, non-defensive language.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION BOUNDARIES

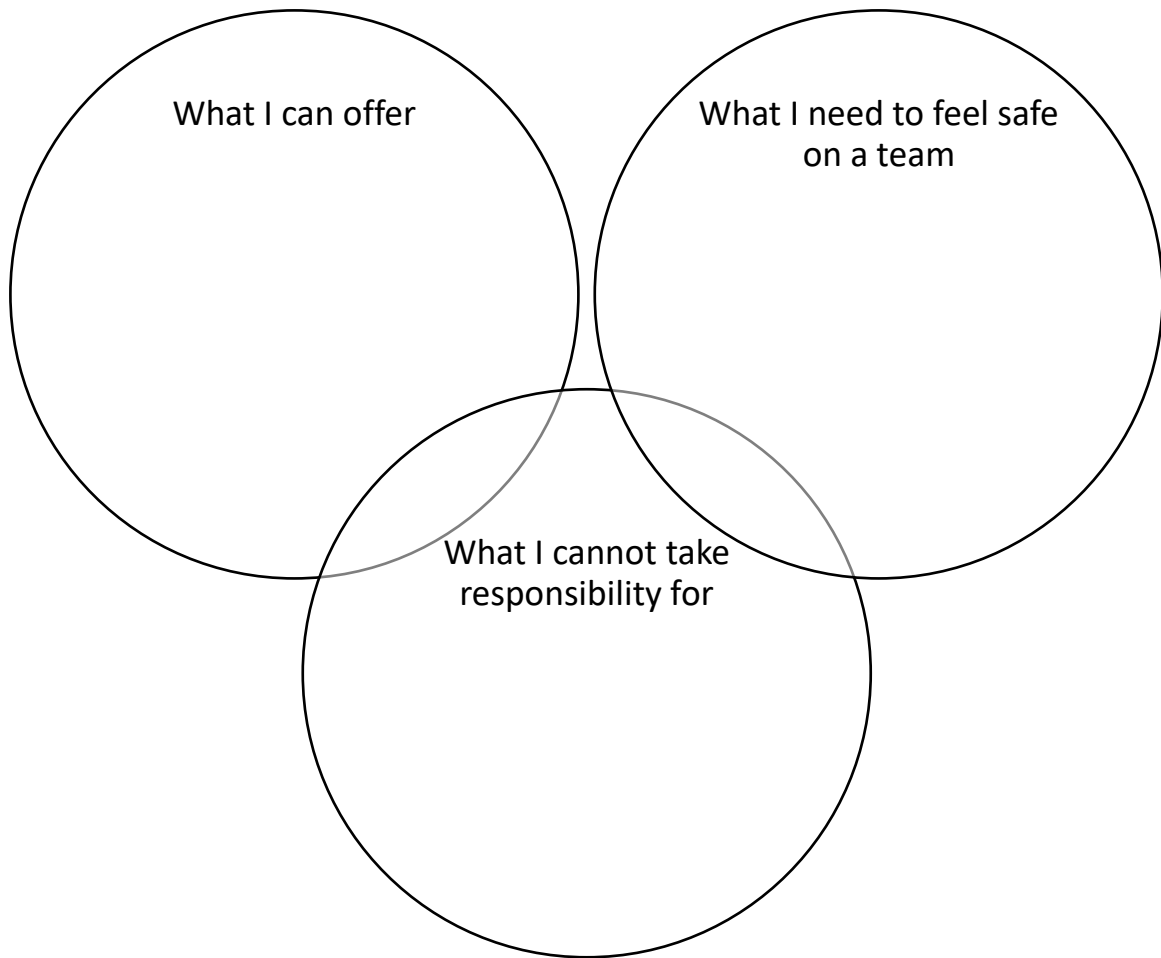
Objective: Practice healthy participation and boundary-setting in collaborative work.

What Over-Functioning Looks Like (E.G., Perfectionism, Taking On Too Much)

What Under-Functioning Looks Like (E.G., Disengagement, Avoidance)

Reflection: "What Do I Fear In Team Settings?"

Boundaries Map



Challenge Prompt

- "This week, I will practice saying 'no' or 'not yet' in one professional interaction."

SECURE COMMUNICATION PLANNER

Objective: Help users prepare for difficult or important work conversations with emotional regulation and clarity.

Scenario	Before the conversation		What do I want to express clearly?	What do I fear might happen?	Write a response using neutral, direct, secure phrasing
	What's the purpose?	What emotion am I carrying in?			

"SECURE AT WORK" PROGRESS TRACKER

Track progress over 4 weeks in areas like:

- Asking for help
- Receiving feedback without panic
- Communicating assertively
- Participating in group decisions
- Reducing overwork or avoidance behaviours

SCORE:

3: Achieved

2: Progress

0: No progress

[illegible]

NEEDS IDENTIFICATION & COMMUNICATION GUIDE

Objective: Help individuals recognize their emotional needs and learn how to express them clearly, respectfully, and securely—especially important for those healing insecure attachment patterns.

SECTION 1: IDENTIFY YOUR CORE NEEDS

Instructions: Review the categories below. Place a ✓ next to needs that resonate with you most strongly in relationships.

Category	Common Emotional Needs
Safety & Stability	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistency <input type="checkbox"/> Predictability <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional safety
Connection & Closeness	<input type="checkbox"/> Being seen/heard <input type="checkbox"/> Physical affection <input type="checkbox"/> Quality time <input type="checkbox"/> Shared experiences
Autonomy & Respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Space <input type="checkbox"/> Independence <input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries honoured <input type="checkbox"/> Being trusted
Validation & Recognition	<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling valued <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciation <input type="checkbox"/> Empathy <input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation of worth
Support & Reliability	<input type="checkbox"/> Dependability <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement <input type="checkbox"/> Help when needed <input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving together

SECTION 2: CLARIFY WHAT YOU NEED IN YOUR WORDS

Instructions: Choose 2–3 needs you checked above. Write out a statement for each that clarifies the need in your own language.

Example: “I need consistency in communication. When I don’t hear from someone, I start to spiral.”

→ Reframed securely: *“Regular check-ins help me feel safe and grounded in our connection.”*

Need	Your Insecure Response (What you usually do/say)	Secure Communication Statement

SECTION 3: PRACTICE – REAL-LIFE TRANSLATION

Instructions: Fill out the prompts below for a recent or current situation where your need wasn't met.

The Situation:

Describe what happened: "I asked for help with a project and was ignored."

What I Felt:

"Unimportant, anxious."

The Need Behind the Feeling:

"I need to feel supported and heard."

What I Wish I Had Said (Secure Style):

"When I don't hear back, I start to feel unsure about where we stand. It would help if you could acknowledge my message—even if it's a quick note."

SECTION 4: SECURE COMMUNICATION FORMULA

Use this sentence formula to assert your needs respectfully:

"When ____ happens	I feel ____.	What I need is ____.

Examples:

- *"When plans change last-minute, I feel unimportant. I need more advance notice to feel respected."*
- *"When you check in during busy days, I feel cared for. That kind of support means a lot to me."*

Needing something doesn't make you needy. Secure people recognize, own, and communicate their needs without apology or aggression.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS

- A **red flag** is a persistent pattern that **violates your safety, dignity, or boundaries**.
- A **growth opportunity** is a moment that requires **conversation, not toleration**—and only matters if **both people** are willing to grow.

RED FLAG VS. GROWTH OPPORTUNITY CHECKLIST

Objective: Help users distinguish between secure and insecure relational behaviours, identify red flags, and build discernment between what's *toxic*, what's *difficult but workable*, and what's *genuinely healthy*.

Part 1: Comparison Table — Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationship Patterns

Relational Element	Healthy Dynamics (Secure Attachment)	Unhealthy Dynamics (Insecure or Toxic Attachment)
Communication	Open, clear, emotionally honest conversations—even during conflict.	Avoidance, passive-aggression, stonewalling, or emotional outbursts.
Boundaries	Boundaries are stated, respected, and renegotiated when needed.	Boundaries are ignored, violated, or viewed as rejection.
Emotional Support	Mutual emotional presence; safe to be vulnerable.	One-sided caretaking, emotional shutdown, or guilt-tripping.
Trust	Built through consistency, accountability, and time.	Built through intensity, secrecy, manipulation, or dependence.
Autonomy	Each person supports the other's independence and individuality.	Attempts to control, fix, isolate, or define the other person.
Conflict Resolution	Conflict is addressed calmly and constructively; repair is prioritized.	Conflict leads to blame, withdrawal, escalation, or punishment.
Consistency	Words and actions align; reliability is evident over time.	Hot-cold behaviour, unpredictability, or overpromising and underdelivering.

Part 2: Red Flags vs. Growth Opportunities

Instructions: Use this checklist to reflect on a current or past relationship. Note whether each behaviour is a **red flag** (🚩) or a **growth opportunity** (🔑).

Behaviour or Pattern	🚩 / 🔑
They minimize your concerns or call you “too sensitive.”	
You feel anxious or fearful about bringing up your needs.	
They take accountability when they’ve hurt you.	
You are expected to “get over it” quickly without proper repair.	
They respect your physical and emotional boundaries.	
They say “That’s just how I am” when you ask for change.	
Arguments lead to mutual understanding, not winning.	
They go silent for days after conflict (stonewalling).	
You feel safe being vulnerable—even during disagreement.	
You are blamed for their emotional state.	

Reflection Prompt:

- Which of these have you normalized in past relationships?
- Which ones align with the kind of relationship you want to build?

Part 3: Reframe the Grey Area

Some behaviours aren't outright toxic but need clarity. Use the table below to assess whether it's a **true red flag** or a **growth opportunity**, based on patterns.

Situation or Pattern	Is this a Red Flag or a Growth Opportunity? Why?
They pull away when emotionally overwhelmed	
You often apologize to avoid tension	
They express jealousy when you're with others	



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