

FREE GUIDE

Why You Love the Way You Do

Your Complete Guide to Attachment Styles & Healing Your Patterns

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- The 4 attachment styles, explained simply
- How to recognize your own pattern
- What “earned security” actually means
- Five first steps toward changing how you love

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A Note From Abby

Hi, I'm Abby.

I want to tell you something most people never hear: the way you love isn't random, and it isn't a character flaw. It's a pattern — one your nervous system built a long time ago, usually before you had the words for any of this, to keep you safe and connected to the people who raised you.

That pattern is called your attachment style. Once you can see it clearly, it stops running the show in the dark.

This guide is the simplest, most honest explanation of attachment theory I can give you. No jargon you don't need, no diagnosis — just a clear map of why you do what you do in relationships, and proof that you can build something different.

You'll meet four attachment styles in these pages: secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized. You'll probably recognize yourself in more than one — that's normal. Most of us are a blend, and our pattern can shift depending on who we're with and what kind of week we're having.

Here's what I want you to know going in: none of these styles make you broken, needy, cold, or too much. They're survival strategies. They made sense once — and every one of them can move toward security with the right understanding and practice.

Read slowly. Take notes. And when you're ready for more support, you'll find it waiting for you at wiredforcalm.com.

With warmth,

Abby

Licensed Relationship Coach · Attachment Specialist

What Is Attachment Theory?

Attachment theory began in the 1950s with British psychiatrist John Bowlby, who studied what happens to children separated from their caregivers. He found that humans are wired from birth with an attachment system — a built-in drive to seek closeness to the people who keep us safe.

Psychologist Mary Ainsworth took the theory further. In her well-known “Strange Situation” studies, she watched how toddlers responded when a parent left the room and returned. From those reactions, she identified distinct patterns of attachment — patterns that decades of research since have shown to follow us into our adult relationships.

The part that matters most: your attachment style was shaped by how consistently your early caregivers responded to your needs. Consistent, attuned care tends to build security. Care that was unpredictable, distant, or frightening tends to build one of the three protective patterns below.

Your attachment style is not a life sentence.

THE FOUR STYLES AT A GLANCE

Secure

Comfortable with closeness and independence. Trusts, communicates needs, recovers from conflict.

Anxious

Craves closeness, fears abandonment. Reads into small things, seeks reassurance.

Avoidant

Values independence, uncomfortable with too much closeness. Pulls away under pressure.

Disorganized

Wants closeness and fears it at the same time. Can look unpredictable from the outside.

Secure Attachment

"I am worthy of love, and people are generally trustworthy."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Communicates needs directly instead of hinting or withdrawing
- Comfortable with both closeness and time apart
- Trusts a partner's intentions without constant reassurance
- Handles conflict without panic or shutdown
- Recovers from disagreements without resentment lingering
- Can be alone without feeling abandoned, and close without feeling trapped

THE INTERNAL EXPERIENCE

Securely attached people aren't relationship experts who never struggle — they still get hurt, still misread situations, still have hard days. The difference is what happens next: they reach toward repair instead of away from it, and they generally believe the relationship can hold the hard moment.

THIS IS YOUR DESTINATION

Wherever you start, secure attachment isn't reserved for people with easy childhoods. It's a set of skills and beliefs you can build at any age — this is called earned security, and it's exactly what the rest of this guide leads toward.

Anxious Attachment

“I need to stay close, or I’ll be left.”

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Frequently seeks reassurance about where the relationship stands
- Reads small changes in tone or response time as signs something is wrong
- Difficulty being alone or single without distress
- Conflict can feel like a five-alarm fire instead of a normal disagreement
- Tends to prioritize the relationship over personal needs
- Can feel intense relief and connection one moment, panic the next

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Anxious attachment often develops when caregiving was loving but inconsistent – warm and present sometimes, distracted or unavailable other times. A child in that environment learns to stay hyper-alert to a caregiver’s mood, because connection wasn’t guaranteed. That hyper-alertness doesn’t switch off in adulthood; it just changes targets.

THE WOUND UNDERNEATH

Underneath the need for reassurance is usually a deeper fear: that you are too much, or not enough, to be loved consistently. That fear is learned – which means it can be unlearned.

Avoidant Attachment

"I have to rely on myself. Closeness costs too much."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Strong preference for independence, even when it isn't necessary
- Discomfort with emotional conversations or vulnerability
- Tends to minimize or rationalize needing other people
- Creates distance — physically or emotionally — when a relationship gets close
- Difficulty naming or expressing feelings in the moment
- Can come across as calm or unbothered while quietly disengaging

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Avoidant attachment often develops when a child's emotional needs were met with discouragement, dismissal, or the message that independence was safer than dependence. Over time, the child learns to meet their own needs and stop expecting much from others — a strategy that protected them then, and quietly limits closeness now.

THE WOUND UNDERNEATH

Underneath the self-reliance is usually an old belief that needing someone isn't safe. Avoidant attachment isn't the absence of feeling — it's feeling that learned to go quiet.

Disorganized Attachment

"I want closeness, but closeness isn't safe."

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Oscillates between craving closeness and pushing it away
- Relationships can feel like what you want most and what you fear most, at once
- Difficulty trusting consistently, even with people who've earned it
- Can swing between anxious and avoidant behaviors, sometimes in the same day
- Strong reactions to conflict – fight, flight, or freeze
- Often carries a history of relationships that felt unpredictable or unsafe

WHERE IT COMES FROM

Disorganized attachment typically develops when a caregiver was a source of both comfort and fear – loving at times, frightening or unpredictable at others. The child's nervous system never gets a consistent answer to "is this person safe," so it learns to expect both outcomes at once. That contradiction is exhausting to carry into adult relationships.

A NOTE OF COMPASSION

If this is your pattern, please hear this clearly: this is the most misunderstood attachment style, and the one that responds most powerfully to safety, patience, and the right support. You are not "too much" or "broken" – your nervous system is doing exactly what it learned to do.

Earned Security

Earned security is what happens when someone with an anxious, avoidant, or disorganized attachment style builds new patterns of trust, communication, and emotional safety — through self-awareness, healthy relationships, and often, support. Research consistently shows that attachment style isn't fixed. The nervous system that learned to protect itself can learn to trust again.

FIVE STEPS TOWARD EARNED SECURITY

01

Name your pattern.

You can't change what you can't see. Notice your style without judgment.

02

Track your triggers.

Notice the moments that activate your protective pattern — and the need underneath them.

03

Practice the opposite move.

Anxious styles practice tolerating distance; avoidant styles practice staying present; disorganized styles practice predictability.

04

Build (or choose) safety.

Earned security is built inside relationships — friendships, coaching, support — where you experience consistency over time.

05

Give it time and repetition.

New patterns aren't built in a single insight. They're built in hundreds of small moments of choosing differently.

Now it's your turn.

STAY CONNECTED

Want more tools for understanding your patterns and calming your nervous system? Join the Wired for Calm email list for new guides, practices, and first access to new resources.

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Your Next Step

This guide is one piece of a bigger picture: Wired for Calm.

Your attachment style doesn't operate alone — it lives inside your nervous system, alongside stress, anxiety, and the way your body holds tension from years of bracing for disconnection. Healing one without the other only gets you so far.

Wired for Calm brings together everything it takes to feel safe in your body and secure in your relationships: breathwork, somatic practices, journaling, nervous-system-friendly habits, and attachment work like what you just read — all in one place.

If what you read in this guide resonated, the deepest version of that work lives in The Secure Attachment Journey, an 8-week guided course that walks you from self-protection to deep connection, step by step.

→ Explore the course: askabbyattachment.teachable.com/p/the-secure-attachment-journey

→ More free tools: wiredforcalm.com

→ Follow along: [@wiredforcalm](https://www.pinterest.com/wiredforcalm) on Pinterest

You don't have to figure this out alone — and you don't have to do it all at once.