BOUNDARIES

Attachment Style Worksheets: 6 Free Printable Exercises

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Attachment style worksheets are worth doing for a reason that has nothing to do with learning what the four styles are. You almost certainly know that part already. Anxious, avoidant, disorganized, secure. You have read the descriptions, you recognized yourself in one of them, and then nothing changed.

That is the normal outcome, and it is not a failure of understanding. Insight arrives in the calm, and attachment patterns fire in the heat. The gap between knowing you get anxious when someone takes six hours to reply and not checking your phone for the eleventh time is not made of information. Writing things down closes that gap slightly, because it gives you a record of the pattern that exists outside your own head, where the pattern cannot rewrite it.

Six exercises below. They are ungated and there is nothing to download. Print the page if you would rather write by hand.

Why attachment style worksheets beat reading another explainer

The problem with attachment content, including ours, is that it describes the pattern from the outside while you experience it from the inside.

From the outside: “anxious attachment involves heightened sensitivity to signs of withdrawal.” From the inside: it is 9pm, they said “we should talk tomorrow,” and you have now constructed

four complete theories about what that means, ranked them by likelihood, and drafted two replies you have not sent.

A worksheet works because it forces the second version onto paper. Once you have written the four theories down, they are noticeably weaker. Not gone. Weaker.

If you have not read the underlying explanations yet, they are worth having first: anxious attachment (/people-pleasing/anxious-attachment/), avoidant attachment (/boundaries/avoidant-attachment/), and disorganized attachment (/boundaries/disorganized-attachment/) each cover the signs and the origins in detail. Come back here for the doing part.

Worksheet 1: Which style is actually yours

Answer each statement with often, sometimes, or rarely. Answer for how you are in close relationships, not at work, and not with the friend who is easy.

Group A

1. When someone takes longer than usual to reply, I assume something is wrong.
2. I need more reassurance than I am comfortable admitting.
3. When there is distance between us, I move toward it rather than wait.
4. I would rather have a difficult conversation at 1am than go to sleep unresolved.

Group B 5. When someone gets emotionally intense, I feel a physical urge to leave. 6. I am proud of not needing much from anyone. 7. I notice small flaws in a partner more clearly as they get closer. 8. I handle things alone by default, even when help is available.

Group C 9. I want closeness badly and I distrust it when it arrives. 10. My reactions surprise me: I pull someone in and then push them away. 11. Conflict makes me feel unsafe rather than just uncomfortable. 12. I can go from very open to completely shut down within one conversation.

Group D 13. I can say what I need without rehearsing it first. 14. When someone is distant, I can ask about it once and then let it sit. 15. I can be close to someone without losing track of what I want.

Mostly often in A points to anxious. In B, avoidant. In C, disorganized. In D, secure or earned secure.

Two honest notes about this. Most people land in two groups rather than one, and the mix is normal rather than a sign you did it wrong. And your style is partly a property of the specific relationship, so an avoidant person with an anxious partner will look more avoidant than they do alone.

If you want this scored for you instead, the attachment style quiz (/quiz/attachment-style/) runs the same territory with more questions and gives you a result page you can keep.

Worksheet 2: The activation log

This is the one that works. The others are useful. This one changes things, and it is also the one people skip, because it requires you to write something down while you feel bad rather than afterwards.

Keep it for two weeks. Every time your attachment system fires, log five things.

Field	Example entry
What happened, factually	She said "I need some space this weekend"
The time and where I was	Thursday 7pm, at home, alone
What I felt in my body	Chest tight, could not sit down, checked phone repeatedly
The story I told myself	She is losing interest and being polite about it
What I did	Sent three messages, then apologized for sending three messages

Do not analyze while you log. Just record. The analysis is what your system wants you to do instead of feeling the thing, and it is very good at making that look productive.

At the end of two weeks, read the whole log in one sitting. What you are looking for is not the content, which will be different every time. You are looking for the shape: the same trigger category, the same physical signal, the same story, the same move. Most people find they have between one and three of these and have been experiencing them as dozens of unrelated bad evenings.

Worksheet 3: The protest and shutdown audit

Worksheet 2 gives you what you did. This one asks what it cost.

List your five most frequent responses from the “what I did” column. Then, for each one, answer three questions in writing.

What was I actually asking for? Underneath the behavior there is a request, and it is usually plain and reasonable. Three unanswered messages is not really about the messages. It is “tell me we are okay.”

What did the behavior communicate instead? This is the uncomfortable one. The request was “tell me we are okay.” What landed was pressure. Anxious protest tends to arrive as urgency, and urgency makes people withdraw, which is precisely the thing you were trying to prevent.

What did it cost me? Not what it cost the relationship. What it cost you. An hour of sleep. Your sense of yourself as someone with proportion. The specific humiliation of apologizing for a message you were right to want to send.

Avoidant readers, this exercise runs the same way but the behaviors are quieter and therefore harder to catch: getting suddenly busy, answering warmth with logistics, finding the flaw that justifies the distance you had already decided on. The cost column is the one that matters for you, because deactivation is cheap in the moment and expensive over years.

Worksheet 4: The gap and the story

Attachment activates in gaps. The unanswered message, the changed plan, the flat tone, the two days before the reply.

A gap contains no information. You fill it, instantly and without noticing, and the filling feels like perception rather than invention.

Take one real gap from your log and write three columns.

Column 1: the facts only. What a camera would have recorded. “Message sent 2:14pm. No reply by 9pm.” That is the entire factual content, and writing it out is deflating in a useful way.

Column 2: my story. The full version, including the part you would not say out loud. Write it properly. A half-written story keeps its power.

Column 3: three other explanations that fit the same facts. Not comforting ones. Plausible ones. Phone died. Work went badly. They are avoidant and this is their Thursday. They are annoyed about something specific and will say so tomorrow.

The point is not to replace your story with a nicer story. Your story might be right. The point is to notice that you produced one instantly and treated it as the only one available.

Worksheet 5: The plain sentence

Every attachment style has a way of asking for something without asking for it. Anxious asks through volume and repetition. Avoidant asks by not asking and then resenting that nobody noticed. Disorganized does both within the same hour.

Write the plain version.

Take three recent situations. For each, write the sentence you actually said or did, then write the version below.

Structure: "When [specific thing], I felt [emotion]. What I want is [concrete request]."

Worked example. What happened: three messages, then an apology for the three messages. The plain version: "When plans change last minute I get anxious and start over-explaining. What I want is a quick text saying we are still on, even if the details move."

The plain version is harder to say, and that is not a coincidence. It carries a real risk, because a clear request can be clearly declined, whereas protest behavior keeps the request deniable. If you have been avoiding directness, that avoidance is doing a job.

We have more of this in the assertiveness scripts (/assertiveness/communication/) if you want the general form rather than the attachment-specific one.

Worksheet 6: The four-week check

Attachment change is slow and almost invisible day to day, which is why people quit. This gives you something to measure that is not “do I feel more secure,” a question nobody can answer honestly about themselves.

Every four weeks, score these six from 1 to 5.

1. Time between the trigger and my response. Longer is better.
2. Number of activation-log entries this month, compared to last.
3. How often I said the plain version instead of the protest version.
4. How long it took to recover after an activation. Hours instead of days is real progress.
5. Whether I could name the pattern while it was happening, not just afterwards.
6. Whether I stayed in one difficult conversation without leaving it or escalating it.

Item 4 usually moves first. Items 1 and 5 move next. Item 2, the raw frequency, often moves last and sometimes goes up before it goes down, because you have started noticing activations you used to sit through without labelling.

The destination has a name and a decent evidence base behind it. Earned secure attachment (/boundaries/earned-secure-attachment/) is what this looks like after a year or two.

How to actually use these

Do not do all six this week. The instinct to do all six this week is worth noticing on its own.

Worksheet 1 once. Worksheet 2 for a fortnight, and it is the non-negotiable one. Then pick whichever of 3, 4 and 5 matches what the log showed you, and work that one for a month. Worksheet 6 on a repeating four-week cycle.

Write by hand if you can. It is slower, and the slowness is the mechanism.

One warning. Doing these while in an actively abusive relationship will hurt rather than help, because every exercise here asks you to examine your own contribution, and that framing is dangerous when the problem is someone else’s behavior. If you are unsure which situation you

are in, read signs of emotional abuse (/toxic-dynamics/signs-of-emotional-abuse/) first. Attachment work assumes two people acting in good faith.

When a worksheet is not enough

These are self-help exercises. They are not therapy and they do not touch trauma.

Get professional support if the activation log surfaces memories that knock you sideways, if your pattern looks disorganized (Group C above, which is more often connected to early trauma than the other two), if you are in danger, or if you have run the exercises for a few months and nothing has shifted. Attachment-focused therapy, EFT and schema therapy all work on this directly, and asking a therapist whether they work with attachment is a reasonable screening question.

Frequently asked questions

Which attachment style worksheet should I start with?

Start with Worksheet 1, even if you are already fairly sure what your style is. People are often wrong about this in a specific direction: they read the anxious description, recognize the feelings, and stop there, when the behavior in Worksheet 3 points somewhere else. After that, go to Worksheet 2 and stay there for two weeks. The activation log is the one that does the actual work, because it catches the pattern while it is happening rather than asking you to remember it accurately afterwards, and nobody remembers it accurately afterwards.

Are these attachment style worksheets printable, and is there a PDF?

Yes. Use your browser's print option to print this page and write on it by hand, or choose Save as PDF in the same dialog to keep a digital copy. There is nothing to buy, nothing to download first, and no email address to hand over. The exercises work the same on paper as they do on screen, and a printed page and a pen are genuinely all you need.

Can your attachment style actually change?

Yes, and this is the best-supported finding in the whole area. Attachment patterns are learned responses rather than fixed traits, and they shift with repeated experience of something different. The route is called earned secure attachment. What it requires is unglamorous: noticing the activation in the moment, not acting on the first impulse, and saying the plain version of what you need instead of the protest version. That is what these worksheets drill. Expect months rather than weeks, and expect the old pattern to reappear under stress long after you thought it was gone.

Are these worksheets for adults, or are they clinical handouts?

They are written for adults working on their own patterns, on their own or alongside therapy. They are not clinical instruments and they do not diagnose anything. If you are in therapy, these work well as homework between sessions, particularly Worksheet 2, because a filled-in activation log gives your therapist the specific incidents that are hard to reconstruct from memory in the room.

More worksheets and guides

- Boundaries worksheets (/boundaries/worksheets/): the same format, applied to naming and holding limits.
- Anxious attachment (/people-pleasing/anxious-attachment/): the full picture behind Group A.
- Avoidant attachment (/boundaries/avoidant-attachment/): the full picture behind Group B.
- Disorganized attachment (/boundaries/disorganized-attachment/): the full picture behind Group C.
- Earned secure attachment (/boundaries/earned-secure-attachment/): where this goes if you keep at it.
- Boundaries guide (/boundaries/): the wider cluster these sit inside.

Reviewed by Dr. Barthwell, addiction medicine specialist. This article is for educational purposes and is not a substitute for professional therapy. If you are experiencing abuse or domestic violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

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