

## **Narcissism and Attachment theory. What is the connection?**

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Narcissists have an “avoidant” attachment style and most people who are strongly affected by a narcissist are of the “anxious” attachment style. Those who have high anxiety responses to the narcissistic devaluing and discarding are likely experiencing a triggering of attachment anxieties, and once those anxieties are triggered it can take a long time to calm down completely.

This explains the Post Traumatic Stress responses in those whose abandonment and rejection wounds are being triggered. Anxious responses to having a close relationship abruptly severed is not to be taken lightly. Infants who experience a disconnect with a primary caregiver can experience that disconnect as a threat to their life. Infants depend entirely upon that parental figure for their very survival. Infants and young children whose needs were not met on a consistent basis will develop either an avoidant or anxious attachment to their primary caregiver. These attachment styles are transferred to adult romantic relationships.

Avoidants are not all narcissists but they do have an ability to detach emotionally from the relationship which triggers an “anxious” person’s attachment anxiety. Avoidants are not comfortable with too much closeness so their relational dynamic is to push their significant other away to create a “safe” emotional distance. Anxious styles, who desire a lot of closeness with their partners, experience being pushed away as rejection or abandonment which trigger a deep seated anxiety. Avoidants also tend to find fault with their partner and blame them for any issues in the relationship. Anxious styles tend to find fault with themselves and blame themselves. So in a relationship like this, all fingers are pointing towards the anxious person which explains why the anxious person feels responsible when the avoidant detaches from the relationship.

When a relationship between an avoidant and anxious style ends, the avoidant can easily detach from the relationship and move on where the anxious person is plagued by a strong need to reconnect with that person. This strong need to reconnect is not logical. It is a deeply entrenched emotional pattern. The avoidants’ behavior can be abusive and unacceptable but it doesn’t change the anxious person’s strong pull to reconnect. There is something deeply ingrained in the anxious person that feels their very survival depends upon their connection with that person.

The irony in understanding these styles is that if an anxious style hooks up with a secure style, these anxieties are calmed through consistent feedback and the anxious person becomes much more secure in the relationship. Even when the relationship ends the anxious person isn’t triggered in the

way he or she would be with an avoidant, because there is open, honest communication and feedback where the secure person shares in the responsibility for the relationship issues.

Studies have shown that anxious styles who hook up with secure styles have just as high a marital success rate as two secure styles.

The **problem with mate selection** is that avoidants represent the largest share of available, single people on the dating scene. This is because avoidants tend to be commitment phobic and can so easily sever their bonds when there is conflict in the relationship. Avoidants avoid conflict and all relationships have conflict. So there is little resolution, issues are swept under the rug and relationships break up sooner rather than later.

If you are an anxious type, the good news is that **you can have a healthy successful relationship;** you just have to know where to look. Secure types don't usually present as the highly charismatic, charming and mysterious individuals that might be the most seductive to you. Anxious types may find themselves a little bored without the drama created with an avoidant. Trading in drama and intensity for security and stability in a relationship will give anxious types the foundation to develop trust in their partner's ability to be there for them on a consistent basis and thrive in the light of that security.