



Disorganized Attachment Workbook

To the Disorganized Attached,

Closeness can feel like something you deeply want—and at the same time, something your body resists. You may find yourself reaching for connection, craving reassurance, wanting to feel secure... and then, almost without warning, something shifts. Your chest tightens, your thoughts get loud, and you feel the urge to pull back, question everything, or protect yourself. It can feel confusing, even frustrating, to experience both the desire to be close and the instinct to create distance.

This isn't "inconsistent" or "too much"—it's your nervous system trying to make sense of early experiences where connection didn't always feel safe. The same place that was meant to provide comfort may have also been where you felt hurt, overwhelmed, or unsure. So your system adapted by learning both—to move toward closeness and to guard against it. That push and pull isn't a flaw—it's protection. And with understanding, you can begin to create a sense of safety that feels more steady, predictable, and secure, starting from within.

To the Partner of the Disorganized Attached,

You're in a relationship where closeness can feel real and meaningful one moment—and then suddenly shift into distance the next. Just as things start to feel steady, something changes, and you're left trying to figure out what happened. You may find yourself replaying conversations, questioning your role, or trying to adjust how you show up to keep things from tipping the other way. Loving someone who both reaches for you and pulls away can feel confusing and, at times, emotionally exhausting.

This isn't because you're doing something wrong, and it's not about you being "not enough." Their system learned early on that connection could feel both safe and unsafe at the same time. So now, when closeness builds, it can trigger both the desire for intimacy and the instinct to protect themselves from it. Understanding this doesn't mean you ignore your own needs—it means you begin to see the pattern clearly, so you can respond with more steadiness, clarity, and self-respect. You deserve a relationship that feels grounded, not unpredictable—and this is where that understanding begins.

Work privately first, then share as you are comfortable.
Just like anything else, you will get what you put into it.



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The Anxious Attachment Style BluePrint

By Communication Matters

A practical roadmap to understanding the four attachment styles and building secure, lasting love.

Why Your Attachment Style Matters

Your attachment style is your nervous system's blueprint for relationships—it shapes what you notice, how you react to distance or closeness, and how you seek comfort. Without understanding it (and your partner's), you'll solve problems with the wrong tools or blame natural instincts. The good news? Attachment is a spectrum, shifts with stress, and can be rewired through awareness and practice.

How Attachment Forms

From infancy, we learn: seek safety when distressed, explore when calm. Reliable caregiving builds secure bonds; inconsistent or scary responses create anxious, avoidant, or fearful patterns. These old survival strategies now block the intimacy you crave—but targeted tools can shift you toward earned security.

Where It Starts

Picture a childhood where the people meant to protect you sometimes scared you—chaotic, frightening, or wildly unpredictable care. Both big traumas and small ones taught your young heart: *I want closeness, but it's where the danger hides*. Love became a tug-of-war between craving and fearing.

What Anxious Attachment Feels Like

You feel the urgency to reach for connection the moment something shifts. When a text goes unanswered or the tone changes, your chest tightens and your mind starts searching for what went wrong. You replay conversations, look for reassurance, and feel a strong pull to close the distance so you can feel okay again. When that connection isn't steady, the anxiety builds quickly—your thoughts get louder, your emotions intensify, and it becomes hard to settle.

This isn't "neediness"—it's your nervous system on high alert. You were shaped by experiences where care wasn't always consistent, where closeness could be present one moment and uncertain the next. You learned to stay attuned, to reach, to hold on, because connection didn't always feel secure. Now, even small moments of distance can trigger that old fear: if I don't act, I could lose this.

The Four Attachment Styles

Style	Core Fear	Patterns	Cues
Dismissive Avoidant (DA)	Closeness threatens my independence	Delays replies, sticks to logistics, needs space, intellectualizes feelings	Relief from distance; trapped
Fearful Avoidant (FA)	Closeness means danger	Push-pull cycles, tests loyalty/cold shifts, anger then shame	Exposed when close, rejected when distant
Anxious Preoccupied	I'll be abandoned if I don't hold on	Frequent texts, chases, explains, reassurance, ruminates	Physically ill from space; Replays conversations
Secure	None dominant	Communicates needs directly	Assumes good intent; asks clearly without panic

How It Plays Out in Relationships

In relationships, it shows up as:

- Push-pull cycles: dive in hot, then bolt cold.
- Testing and punishing; stories flip from ideal to enemy.
- Sudden anger bursts, then waves of regret.
- Always waiting for the other shoe to drop.
- Craving reassurance, then feeling suffocated when it's given.
- Hypervigilance: reading into tone, timing, and small shifts.
- Difficulty trusting calm—peace can feel unfamiliar or unsafe.
- Pulling away right when things start to feel stable.
- Intense fear of abandonment alongside fear of being hurt.
- Confusion about needs: wanting closeness but not knowing how to stay in it.

During tension, you swing wildly: "Stay!" then "Go!" You might start fights to feel control, then panic when they escalate. Sharp words fly, apologies chase fast.

You're passionate, perceptive, deeply feeling—but the constant alert steals your peace.

"Is This Me?" Quick Signs

Closeness feels exposing.

Distance feels like abandonment.

Your view of them flips overnight.

Fights and words replay endlessly.

You brace for the worst always.

Spotting the Difference

Unlike anxious (steady pursuit), you yo-yo crave-and-flee. Unlike dismissive (cool distance), you try hard first then shutdown from fear. Secures stay even; you swing under pressure. This is your heart's survival dance—cleverly protecting a wounded core, ready for gentle healing.

The Path to Feeling Secure

With help, fearful avoidant patterns can settle into steady trust. At Communication Matters, we uncover those old wounds together, build safety in slow closeness, and practice staying present without the swings. You'll start feeling secure without waiting for betrayal. Ready for that shift? You'll realize relationships can feel safe and real. You deserve bonds that match your deep heart. You're not broken. You just want to feel safe in love. When ready, several paths await. You can start with this workbook and if you decide you want to dive deeper in the future, start with your free consultation.

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Step 1: What Disorganized Attachment Feels Like Inside You

You want closeness, but when someone gets too close, your body suddenly tenses up. Part of you wants to be held, and another part wants to run away. You may find yourself thinking, “I can’t live without them” one moment, and “I need to get away” the next. Small changes in tone, facial expression, or timing can feel huge inside you. Your heart might race, your stomach drops, and you feel both pulled toward and pushed away from your partner at the same time. This can feel confusing and exhausting. You are not crazy. Your system learned early that love could be both safe and dangerous.

Check what feels true for you:

- I want closeness but panic when it actually happens
- I get scared when people are too loving or too distant
- I can go from “don’t leave me” to “leave me alone” very fast
- I feel I cannot trust my own feelings about people
- I am afraid they will hurt me if I get too close
- It is hard to relax even in good moments

When does this fearful feeling show up the most with your partner? Describe a recent moment:

Where do you feel it in your body (chest, stomach, throat, head)?

What is the first thought that usually appears in your mind in these moments?

Write anything else you want to say about how this feels for you:

Pause, breathe, stay—you choose safety one moment at a time.

Step 2: Where Your Fearful Wiring Began

As a child, you may have turned to the same people for love and also felt scared of them or around them. The people who were supposed to keep you safe might have yelled, shut down, disappeared, or even hurt you. Your young brain got mixed messages: “I need you” and “you scare me.” So your body learned to be on high alert around love. You did not make this up. You adapted to survive.

Check what sounds familiar from childhood:

- The people I loved sometimes scared me
- Home felt tense, chaotic, or unsafe
- I did not know what mood I would get from adults
- Sometimes I felt comfort, sometimes I felt fear
- I felt I had to watch every little thing around me
- I did not know who I could really trust

Think of a memory where you needed comfort but also felt afraid. What happened?

What did your body feel back then (tight, frozen, shaky, hot, numb)?

What did you learn about love and safety from experiences like this?

How does that same feeling show up now in your relationship? Describe one example:

If you could talk to your younger self in that moment, what kind words would you say?

Little one, you were so brave to keep loving through the fear. You're learning how to be safe now.

Step 3: Your Push–Pull Dance with Your Partner

With fearful attachment, the dance with your partner often looks like this: you move closer, then suddenly feel unsafe and pull away. You might open up, then later feel exposed and shut down or lash out. Your partner may feel confused: one day you seem all in, the next day you seem cold or distant. Inside, you are trying to protect yourself from being hurt again. You are afraid of being abandoned and afraid of being too close at the same time.

Check what fits your dance:

- I get very close, then feel trapped and pull away
- I share something deep, then later regret it
- I can change quickly from warm to distant
- I test people to see if they will hurt me
- I worry they will leave, but also push them away
- I feel like I do not know how to “do” relationships

Describe a recent push–pull moment with your partner. What was the trigger?

What did you do next (say, text, action)?

How did your partner respond?

What were you really needing underneath your reaction (comfort, space, safety, clarity, proof they care)?

If you draw your pattern as a loop, what does it look like?

Trigger → I move close → I feel scared → I pull away → I feel alone

Draw or describe your loop here:

Reach steady, pause together, hold the connection—you create safety in every shared step.

Step 4: Calming Your Fear Before You React

Your fear can rise fast. You may feel like you have to react right away or you will explode or shut down. Before you react, you can give your body a chance to calm down. This helps you choose what to do instead of just reacting from fear.

Try this simple calming tool:

- Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 7 seconds
- Repeat this a minimum of 5 times

Notice your body as you breathe.

Before breathing, my fear level (1–10) was: _____

After breathing, my fear level (1–10) is: _____

What changed in your body (less tight, slower heartbeat, clearer head)?

Now add gentle words to yourself, like:

“I feel scared and confused right now, and that makes sense.”

“I can pause and choose what to do next.”

“I am allowed to protect myself and also to receive care.”

Write a calming sentence you want to say to yourself when fear shows up:

Think of the last time you reacted quickly from fear (shutting down, lashing out, disappearing). What happened?

If you had used this breathing and calming sentence first, what might you have done differently?

Practice space: Write how you want to respond next time fear rises:

Each calm breath gives your fear less control and gives you more choice.

Page 5: Noticing Your Steps Toward Feeling Safer

Even if you still feel scared a lot, you have moments where you are a little more open, a little more calm, or a little more honest. Its important to acknowledge these moments as they help you to feel safer. Your mind may skip over them, but they matter.

Check any “safer moments” you have noticed:

- I told the truth about feeling scared instead of hiding it
- I stayed present instead of fully shutting down
- I asked for a break without ending the whole relationship
- I let myself enjoy a good moment without ruining it
- I trusted my partner a little more than before
- I noticed fear and did one small thing to calm it

Think of three times recently when you felt a tiny bit safer with your partner. What happened in each moment?

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

- 3. _____

What felt different in your body during those safer moments? _____

Choose one small daily action that helps you feel a little safer (example: one slow breath before reacting, naming “I feel scared,” staying for one more minute of connection). Write it here: _____

At the end of each day this week, answer: “Did I take one small step toward safety today?” Yes / No
What did that step look like today? _____

What do you want to tell yourself about your progress right now? _____

Breathe first, fear second—you choose calm over chaos every time.

Page 6: Loving Someone with Fearful/Disorganized Attachment

Your partner wants to be close to you and is also scared of being close. They may pull you in and then push you away. They may say “I need you” one moment and “leave me alone” the next. This is confusing and can be painful for you. It can feel like you are always walking on eggshells. Their behavior is not about you not being good enough. Their nervous system learned that people can be both safe and unsafe. They are trying to protect themselves from hurt, even when you mean well.

Check what you notice about your partner:

- They sometimes get close, then suddenly pull away
- They can change quickly from warm to cold
- They seem to want me, but not trust me
- They sometimes test me to see if I will leave
- They can enjoy closeness, then later regret it or feel exposed
- They often seem both afraid of losing me and afraid of me

How do their mixed signals make you feel (confused, hurt, angry, sad, tired)?

What is the hardest part of loving someone who is both “come close” and “go away”?

When was there a time you could see their fear underneath their reaction? Describe it:

What do you wish they understood about how this affects your heart?

Write one thing you truly appreciate about them, beyond the fear:

See their fear, not their fight—your curiosity builds the bridge they need.

Page 7: Seeing Their Past Through Kinder Eyes

Your partner may have grown up in a home that did not feel safe or steady. The same people who were supposed to care for them may have sometimes yelled, ignored them, or scared them. They may have had to watch everything carefully to stay safe. Their body learned: “People I love can hurt me. I must always be on guard.” When they react strongly now, it is often this old fear waking up.

Check what you think might have been true for them as a child:

- Home felt tense, loud, or unsafe
- Adults were sometimes kind and sometimes scary
- They did not know which version of a caregiver they would get
- They had to guess what mood the room was in
- They did not feel fully safe telling the truth
- They felt alone even when people were around

Think of one story they have told you about their past that points to this kind of fear. What do you remember?

If you imagine them as a small child in that situation, what do you feel?

When you see their fear now, what might that younger part of them be needing from you (gentle tone, patience, clear words, calm body)?

Write one sentence you could say that speaks to both the adult and child inside them, for example: “I know you’re scared right now. I’m not leaving and we will work through this together.”

How does it change your view of their behavior when you remember their past?

Look back with compassion—what hurt them then helps you love them now.

Page 8: Your Shared Push–Pull Dance

Your partner’s fear pulls you in and pushes you away. You may react too. When they get close, you might feel hopeful. When they suddenly pull away, you might feel angry, hurt, or tempted to give up. Together, you form a pattern. If you can see the pattern, you can begin to change it.

Check what feels like your side of the dance:

- I feel confused by their mixed signals
- When they pull away, I either chase or shut down
- I sometimes react strongly to their reactions
- I feel like I am always guessing what they need
- I get tired and think about pulling away myself
- Sometimes I stop sharing how I feel to avoid more drama

Describe a recent time when you two were in a push–pull dance. What started it?

What did your partner do next?

What did you do in response?

Underneath your reaction, what were you really needing (clarity, respect, kindness, safety, understanding)?

If you draw your shared pattern as a loop, what does it look like?

Write one small change you can make on your side to slow the loop (example: pausing to breathe, naming “I feel confused,” asking “Can we talk about what just happened?”):

Name your steps together—one steady pause can stop the dance.

Page 9: What Helps Them Feel a Little Safer

Your partner often does not feel safe, even in normal moments. Small things you do can help their body feel a tiny bit safer. You cannot take away all their fear, but you can make it easier for them to stay present and less likely to shut down or explode.

Things that often help fearful partners:

- Calm tone of voice, even when upset
- Clear, simple words about what you feel and what you plan to do
- Letting them know when you will be back if you need space
- Gentle touch that they can accept or refuse
- Not pushing them to share more than they can in that moment
- Not leaving suddenly in the middle of a hard talk, if possible

Check what seems to help your partner:

- Calm, steady voice
- Clear statements like “I’m not leaving. I just need 20 minutes.”
- Gentle touch with permission
- Check-ins when you said you would
- Saying “I see this is scary for you”
- Letting them move at their own pace

What have you seen calm them down even a little?

What tends to make things worse?

Write three specific things you can do this week to help them feel a bit safer:

1.

2.

3.

How do you feel in your own body when you use these calmer responses?

Your calm words and steady timing teach their body what safety really feels like.

Page 10: Team Secure Tracker

Work on this weekly. Sit close together but not crowded. Set a 15-minute timer. The fearfully attached partner goes first: "What felt safe for me this week?" The partner reflects back what they heard. Then switch: "What felt overwhelming or unsafe for me?" Each of you makes 1 small, realistic request for next week. No fixing, no defending—just hearing.

Fearful attachment carries both longing for closeness and fear of it. Your nervous system swings between "Come close" and "Back away." This page helps slow the push-pull cycle and build safety in the middle zone—connection with room to breathe. Small, predictable rituals calm threat and build trust in the body, not just the mind.

Daily Team Rituals to Start (pick 1–2 only):

- Predictable check-in: Same time daily text or touch ("Thinking of you")
- Gentle reassurance + space: "I'm here and I'm taking 20 minutes to reset"
- Evening grounding: 60 seconds sitting side-by-side, no talking
- Repair ritual: "One moment I appreciated you today was ____"

Blend both paths into simple team habits. Weekly 15-minute safe talk: Fearful partner shares "What felt safe for me?" You reflect "What hurt or felt unsafe?" Each makes one small wish for next week. Morning ritual: "Appreciate you because ____" text. Evening: 60 seconds touch, no talking. Small habits > big promises. Track together 4 weeks. Celebrate every shared win.

Team Wins Tracker (fill out together):

Week 1

Fearful partner win: _____

Partner win: _____

Did the push-pull soften at all? Yes / No

How did your bodies feel different? _____

Week 2

Fearful partner win: _____

Partner win: _____

Did the push-pull soften at all? Yes / No

How did your bodies feel different? _____

Week 3

Fearful partner win: _____

Partner win: _____

Did the push-pull soften at all? Yes / No

How did your bodies feel different? _____

Week 4

Fearful partner win: _____

Partner win: _____

Did the push-pull soften at all? Yes / No

How did your bodies feel different? _____

What feels more stable or predictable between you now? _____

One small next step you BOTH agree to try next week (keep it very doable): _____

You're not trying to fix everything—you're teaching your nervous systems, one small moment at a time, that connection can be safe, steady, and something you can return to together.