

CHAPTER FOUR

Bonding and Chemistry

Let's switch gears and talk about another important requirement for a successful marriage: emotional stability. Humans have something psychologists call the Attachment System that governs how we relate to each other. This attachment system is so pervasive that it controls almost all interactions with other people, and even affects the relationships we have with our pets.

 The attachment system initially develops based on how we relate to our motherss (or whoever cared for us as infantss) or, more accurately, how they related to us. What makes the Attachment System so powerful is the fact that the system is recycled and reused repeatedly throughout our lives with all of our relationships. The system causes us to relate to other people, from friends to spouses, according to a specific attachment style.

 The other reason why the system is so powerful is because it controls how you relate to your own children, which then causes your children to have the same attachment style you have. This is why attachment styles tend to be passed from generation to generation, much like genes for

height, intelligence, and appearance. The attachment styles are usually life-long and are passed on so consistently that you can predict a child's attachment style before they are born, based on the mother's attachment style.

That said, the attachment styles are not set in stone and there are two positive ways they can be changed. You can go to psychotherapy for several years or you can be in a long-term relationship with someone who has a more-secure attachment style than you have. Pulling someone up and repairing their attachment style is hard work that comes on top of the normal relationship challenges, so don't say I didn't warn you. We'll get back to all of that in a moment.

The Strange Situation

In 1969, Mary Ainsworth, a famous psychologist, developed a test called the Strange Situation to classify what attachment style a baby has with its mother or primary caregiver. She originally demonstrated three attachment styles; her former students later discovered a fourth style.

Together, these four styles describe the basic patterns for relating to others that most people follow all their lives.

_____ The way the Strange Situation test works is by briefly separating a young child between the ages of one and three from their mother and then watching the reunion. Trained evaluators observe from behind a one-way mirror to determine the attachment style based on what happens.

_____ The test begins when a mother brings the young child into the observation room, places the child on the floor by some toys, and sits down in a chair. On the other side of the room, across the toys from the mother, is another chair that is empty. The mother is pre-instructed to encourage the child to play with the toys. After a few minutes of play, a female unknown to the child walks in and sits in the empty chair.

_____ The unknown female then attempts to engage the child in play. After a few minutes, the mother's phone rings and the researchers tell her to leave the room. While the mother is gone, the female stranger again tries to engage the child in play or to comfort the child if the child becomes upset when the mother leaves. The mother stays out of the room for up to five minutes, if the child can tolerate it, and then returns. The reunion of the mother with the child is observed, which completes the experiment.

_____ Of the four attachment styles, one is considered healthy or optimal and is called a Secure Attachment. The

next two styles are considered sub-optimal and are called Insecure–Ambivalent and Insecure–Avoidant. The fourth style is, thankfully, less common because it is really bad and is called a Disorganized Attachment style.

A Securely attached child who is tested with a strange situation reacts in a predictable way. They will play with the toys of the floor with little to no encouragement, but when the strange female walks in, they move closer to the mother and refuse to interact with the strange female. When the mother gets up to leave, they get upset and try to follow her. They continue to stay upset while the mother is gone, refuse to go to the strange female, and will not allow her to comfort them. When the mother returns, the child goes toward the mother and calms down quickly once the mother picks them up. This is the ideal reaction to the Strange Situation test.

The Insecure–Ambivalent child reacts a little differently. They also won't go to the stranger and do get upset when the mother leaves, but when the mother returns, the child acts more upset than they appeared to be while the mother was gone. Then the child takes a long time to calm down. In fact, the child is so upset when the mother returns that the child often hits the mother, as if to say, "Don't ever leave me like that again."

_____The **Insecure-Avoidant child** also avoids the unknown female, but when the mother gets up to leave the room, they don't seem to be upset. In fact, the child continues to calmly play with the toys while refusing to interact with a stranger. They also keep playing with the toys when the mother returns, and may not even look up at the mother. The child seems strangely calm throughout the process, but if you put a heart rate monitor on the child, the heart rate shoots up, which shows how internally stressed the child **despite not** showing it on the outside.

_____The **Disorganized child** responds to the strange situation test in one of two different ways. The child will either allow the unknown female to engage them in play and doesn't seem to have any fear of her, despite **her** being a stranger. In extreme cases, the child may even actively seek out the stranger and avoid the mother. Alternatively, the child will avoid both the mother and the stranger and do "**disorganized**" things like rock back and forth or bang their head in the corner. The child can also seem **as if they are** in a daze and won't play with the toys. If they do, it is in odd, limited ways, like making things spin or throwing and breaking the toys. The mother also tends to either ignore the odd behavior or yells and attempts to harshly punish the child.

Attachment Styles and Marriage

Not surprisingly, people with secure attachment styles tend to form stable relationships, which seem a bit boring to the other attachment styles. They tend to be attracted to each other because they see the insecure and disorganized attachment styles as either overly dramatic (Ambivalent) and crazy (Disorganized) or too reserved (Avoidant). If they do marry someone with an insecure attachment style, they can heal the insecure partner over several years with their calm and consistent approach to the relationship.

The one exception is people with disorganized attachment styles. Disorganized types are often so emotionally damaged that they need years of professional help to be able to form stable attachments and functional relationships.

The Insecure-Ambivalent attachment style is typically created by a mother who is distracted and somewhat inattentive to the child and the child's needs. The child learns to "turn up the volume" to get the mother's attention. This dramatic behavior then carries over into adult relationships, where they become jealous and clingy, requiring strong statements and constant displays of love from their partner.

_____ On the flip side, such individuals also tend to be very expressive with their love, as well as highly seductive and romantic. As a result, they are often quite good at starting relationships, but sustaining them is another story. Despite these tendencies, they are capable of having a successful relationship if they are with the right person. If they end up with someone who is securely attached, their attachment style will stabilize and, over time, convert to a secure attachment style. However, if they end up with someone with either insecure attachment style, things get more complicated.

_____ In the case of the Insecure-Avoidant attachment style, the mother has trained the child not to get upset or express distress. As the child grows up, they continue to repress their distress and have trouble expressing their feelings and desires. Even though they feel anxious and clingy on the inside, they appear to be aloof and uncaring to others on the outside. Romantic partners often perceive them as being excessively distant and unloving.

_____ However, when their romantic partner starts to leave them, they feel overwhelmed by the impending loss and often panic. They can feel so threatened that it jolts them out of being reserved and into large expressions of the true depth of their feelings. Once the crisis is over, though,

they quickly return to being stoic and unexpressive until the cycle repeats itself.

The disorganized attachment style is produced either by severe abuse and neglect by the primary caregiver, or by being raised in an orphanage or a revolving series of foster homes with no primary caregiver to bond to. These children are severely emotionally damaged. Without intensive, long-term treatment, they tend to grow up to be extremely manipulative, violent, and suicidal as adults.

Like Marilyn Monroe, who was severely abused by her schizophrenic mother and grew up in a revolving door of foster homes and orphanages, they form tumultuous, chaotic relationships and often end up killing themselves one way or another. It often takes years of professional treatment and arduously working on yourself to overcome such early damage, but I know people who have done exactly that and have become some of the most kind and loving people on this planet. They were then able to have successful marriages.

Recognizing people with disorganized attachment styles is important because, while they are often gorgeous and talented (like Marilyn), they are also extremely dangerous before they recover. Just as with lions and tigers, you don't want to get in the cage with them unless you are well-trained and know what you're doing. That is what we do

as mental health professionals, but just like the lion tamer, we never let our guard down while we are in the cage.

_____ Here are the things to look for to help you spot a man with a disorganized attachment style so you can stay away.

First, he doesn't have a normal relationship with his family, if he even has a family at all. He was often raised by people other than the parents, such as relatives or, worse, in foster care. If he was lucky enough to be adopted, it is almost always after two years of age – that is when the Disorganized attachment style becomes relatively fixed and has to be treated professionally.

_____ If you are even able to obtain accurate information about his biological parents, they tend to have severe drug problems, criminal histories, and multiple failed relationships. Not surprisingly, he most likely doesn't have a stable, supportive relationship with his parents.

_____ Similarly, his biological siblings also tend to have problems with drugs, crime, and failed relationships.

However, you may find exceptions, especially if the sibling was adopted before age two or managed to grow up with the same foster family the entire time. However, he still won't have a stable relationship with the resilient sibling due to his own disorganized attachment style.

Watch out for histories of frequent job changes and constantly moving from city to city. Men with disorganized attachment styles often resort to conning and manipulating others to survive, rather than supporting themselves honestly. As a result, they tend to move and change jobs frequently so people never get to know them well enough to see through their deception.

____ Their own histories of drug problems and criminal behavior are another big clue. They also tend to leave broken people and relationships in their wake like a tornado. Finally, they are not going to openly reveal these things to you. You will have to do your own research and possibly a background check to learn the details, but a lack of long-term, stable, loving relationships with their families is probably the easiest clue to spot.

What Attachment Style Do You Have?

____ Before you start cyber-stalking your friends and family to guess their attachment styles, you need to get a sense of your own so you know what to look for in a man. Take a few minutes to complete this non-scientific attachment survey. Give yourself one point for every question you can answer yes to, plus any bonuses:

1. Are your parents divorced or separated?
2. Did they divorce or separate before you turned 15 years old?
3. Did they divorce or separate before you turned 10 years old?
4. Did they divorce or separate before you turned 5 years old?
5. Did they divorce or separate before you were a year old or were they never really together?
6. Were you raised by someone other than your biological mother? Give yourself one point for every different relative, foster home, and caregiver you lived with before you were 18 years old.
7. Was your mom or the main person who raised you: depressed, angry, gorgeous, a workaholic, alcoholic, a drug addict, or someone who went to prison?
8. Was your family overly proper and focused more on public appearances than on being close and having fun?
9. Did your mom (or primary care giver) have more than one husband/wife or live-in boyfriend/girlfriend? Give yourself one point for each person you grew up with who wasn't your biological father.

10. Did you move to different cities or neighborhoods, where you had to change schools during the school year? Give yourself one point for each move.

11. When was the last time you spoke with your mother or a supportive relative/foster parent? Give yourself one point if it has been more than a month, 2 points if it has been over six months, and 3 points if it has been over a year.

12. Give yourself a point for every time you have snooped through a boyfriend/husband's cellphone, e-mail, or apartment in the last year.

13. Do you hug your parents (or whoever raised you) if you haven't seen them in awhile? Give yourself 2 points if you haven't hugged them since you were a child and 5 points if you have no memory of ever being hugged by anyone who raised you.

14. Give yourself a point for every time you have cheated on a boyfriend/husband in your life.

15. Give yourself a point for every time you have forgiven a man and stayed with him after he cheated on you or hit you. (If the same guy cheated or hit you five times, that's 5 points.)

16 Give yourself a point for every time you have attacked or threatened to kill a boyfriend or husband.

17. Give yourself a point for every person you have had sex with on the day you met them.

18. Give yourself a point for every casual sexual relationship you have ever had.

19. Give yourself a point for every time someone has broken up with you because you were clingy, jealous, or crazy, or if they just disappeared on you without a word.

20. Do people tell you that you should be an actress? Give yourself 2 points if you actually became an actress.

Now add up all your points, including all the points from questions that ask if something happened multiple times. This isn't some kind of moral judgment or purity test. It is just a survey to estimate whether you have a secure or insecure attachment style. Plus, most of these things probably happened when you were a child and are not your fault. You survived it, so chin up.

Analyzing Your Results

0 to 5 Points = Secure Attachment: Wow, you are kind of boring, but that's good because it means you are securely attached. It also means you don't have to be super-careful about whom you marry. You can even marry someone who has an

insecure style and be the loving, secure base to allow him to heal and become securely attached.

_____ Just know that such a relationship will take extra work on top of the normal work of maintaining a marriage for at least several years. The best news is that you will be naturally attracted to securely attached men because you see the other attachment styles as a little crazy and won't have much chemistry with them.

6 to 10 Points = (Mostly) Secure Attachment: Not too bad, but you are in the gray zone between secure and insecure. What this means is that you are more likely to get pulled down if you end up with a guy who is less securely attached than you, so you need to limit yourself to securely attached men or you can get dragged down into some serious relationship drama that would take a lot of marriage counseling to fix, if it can be fixed at all.

_____ The secret to marrying a securely attached guy is to watch out for the extremes and use your r head to balance your heart. If you lean to the Avoidant (reserved) side, you will naturally be drawn to the intense chemistry of the romantic and expressive Ambivalent man. Instead, consciously choose to go for the loving and calm man with less chemistry who shows all the signs of secure

attachment: a stable life with close and supportive relationships with his parents, siblings, and friends.

Similarly, if you lean to the Ambivalent (dramatic) side, you will be drawn to the strong and calm Avoidant male, who in turn will be powerfully drawn to your expressive and vivacious nature. Instead, consciously choose the more expressive and emotionally available man, provided he shows all the signs of being securely attached.

The trick is to go for the man who generates some, but not too much, chemistry. Intense chemistry is almost always a sign that both of you have significant attachment issues that will explosively trigger each other. In marriage, you want a smoothly functioning chemical plant and not a nuclear bomb that keeps going off.

10 to 20 Points = Insecure Attachment: You are solidly in one of the two insecure attachment styles. Your challenge is that you will be most strongly attracted to men who also have insecure styles, while securely attached men will seem a bit dull and boring. You will also be particularly vulnerable to the manipulations of men with disorganized attachment styles, so you have to be extra careful. You might be tempted to think that being with an insecure man isn't a bad thing because he will either balance you out or

be like you and understand you better, but that is not what actually happens.

____ If you are on the [Ambivalent](#) (dramatic) side, your vivacious and spontaneous nature will tend to attract the strong and stable (more accurately, emotionally unavailable and non-expressive) male with an Avoidant style. Your relationship will work for [a](#) while, but eventually his silence and lack of expressiveness will frustrate you and make you feel like he doesn't love you or care about your feelings. Then you will either get in his face to provoke a reaction or try to leave, both of which will shock him into being more expressive for a while, but he'll eventually go back to his previously reserved and non-expressive style until the cycle repeats itself.

____ However, if you go for the romantic and expressive [Ambivalent](#) guy [who](#) understands how you feel, you will be literally playing with fire. At first, you will think you won the lottery because you are with a guy [who](#) knows how to satisfy your need for dramatic and [over-the-top](#) expressions of love. However, he needs the same thing, so what happens when you both need the same thing at the same time?

____ Inevitably, you will start competing with each other to get your needs met first and met more fully. [As](#) I said, when things [s](#) are good, [this guy is](#) amazing in these kinds of

relationships, but when things turn bad, you two will have explosive fights with dramatic breakups and passionate reunions. These relationships are never boring, but eventually the [roller-coaster](#) leaves you broken and exhausted.

____ Similarly, if you are on the Avoidant side, you will be the strong and stable one (i.e., emotionally unavailable and non-expressive) [who](#) is captivated by the spontaneity and passion for life of the [Ambivalent](#) guy. You and your dramatic man will have the same dysfunctional cycle, just with the roles reversed.

____ Relationships between two Avoidant people don't work well either, because both still need expressions of love and emotional sharing from [each other](#), but neither can do it, so they have long periods of tense silence broken only by explosive arguments.

____ The obvious solution here is to marry a securely attached guy, but doing so is harder than it seems. When you meet a securely attached guy, it will seem like you only have a modest amount of chemistry. However, that is just your [intensity-seeking](#), insecure attachment system talking. [To](#) pull this off and actually marry a securely attached guy, you will have to resist your craving for

intensity and instead make your choice with your head and not your heart.

As I said, this isn't easy, but it is doable if you commit to marrying a good man who loves you rather than chasing after the guy who makes you feel the most loved. I will say it again: You must go for the guy who shows he loves you with a calm, consistent love rather than the guy who generates the most chemistry and makes you feel the most loved (by tapping into your insecure attachment style).

However, instead of trying to use your head to get it right, you can start long-term psychodynamic therapy (not cognitive behavioral therapy, also know as CBT) with a therapist who seems to get you and makes you feel comfortable. The good news is that you don't have to do 10 years of therapy before you can start dating. You only need a year or so if you keep going to therapy while you're dating. Your therapist can also help you make a good choice about whom to date and then can support you during the early years of your relationship, when your attachment issues inevitably get triggered. Check out Appendix II for tips on finding a psychotherapist.

20 to 30 Points = Deeply Insecure Attachment: "Houston, we have a problem." I'm sorry to say that you probably won't be able to just use your head to make a good choice and will need to go to psychotherapy for a while before you will be able to have a successful marriage or raise psychologically healthy children. I'm not saying you have a Disorganized attachment style; just that your attachment style is sufficiently insecure that you can't override it with logic. Yes, you could always luck out and end up with a securely attached guy, but the odds are not in your favor.

_____ I know I am asking you to take a leap of faith and trust me, but think back over your life and your relationships. Have any of them been that successful? How many times did you seem to be with the perfect guy, only to have it blow up in your face, leaving you to wonder how you missed his obvious flaws? How many times have you met nice men who treat you really well, only to have them suddenly disappear on you with no explanation? How many times has your insecurity and fear of abandonment ruined a good relationship and driven away a kind and loving man?

_____ I know how hard it is to accept that we are the cause of our relationship problems, because I was in your situation not that long ago. I had the same blind spots

that caused me to miss obvious problems in other people. I would leave good women because they seemed a little dull or for something minor like an outfit they wore. Other times, my insecurity and fear of abandonment would make me so clingy that it drove them away.

I had an Insecure-Avoidant attachment style for most of my life, thanks to being in an adoption agency's nursery for several months as an infant and then being adopted by a reserved, unexpressive couple. As a young psychiatrist, I arrogantly believed that I didn't have an attachment problem since I didn't have suicidal thoughts or cut myself like my patients did. In fact, I only went to therapy in the first place because my girlfriend (who would later become my second wife) threatened break up with me if I didn't. When we were first dating, the consistent closeness of our relationship triggered me unconsciously to act out and create conflict and distance between us. I would break up with her and go back to dating a former girlfriend, then break up with the former girlfriend and get back together with my future wife, over and over again.

With the help of my therapist, I was able to stop the vicious cycle and eventually marry my second wife. Unfortunately, our marriage wasn't viable for other reasons

despite the years of psychotherapy, deeply loving each other, and three excellent marriage therapists.

 On the positive side, your therapy probably won't take as long as mine, because you will go into it accepting that you have attachment issues, and you won't be desperately trying to hold onto a marriage that was never viable. It may only take a year or so to make sufficient progress with your attachment style so you are able to make the positive choice of being with a man with a secure attachment and not fall for the intense chemistry of a man with an insecure or Disorganized style.

 However, you will still need to continue seeing your therapist, because being in a relationship will powerfully trigger your attachment issues, even if you are with a securely attached man. The key is to pick a therapist you feel comfortable with and who seems to get you. Whether they have a PhD or just a master's degree isn't important, as long as they are comfortable doing psychodynamic psychotherapy. You don't want to go to someone who exclusively does cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which is excellent for anxiety and depression, but doesn't do much for attachment.

 While you are in therapy, you will have to resist the urge to quit for a variety of reasons before you are done.

Unlike CBT, psychodynamic psychotherapy often feels unstructured, and it can seem as if you aren't making progress. That is because it works at a deeper, unconscious level rather than on the superficial level of the conscious mind. It is also non-linear, meaning there are no specific steps in it as in CBT. It is more like slowly peeling an onion, one layer at time.

The key is to be patient and embrace the process. You may not feel any different at first, but over time, you will notice that you react differently from how you have in the past when faced with similar situations. Situations that would have overwhelmed you before will only moderately stress you and you will still be able to effectively deal with them.

Over 30 Points = Possible Disorganized Attachment: I don't want you to feel like I've given you a death sentence here. I'm just saying you might have a Disorganized attachment style. Obviously, I would have to evaluate you in person to be sure, but I think it is safe to say you struggle in relationships and would be better served by going to psychotherapy and focusing on healing your attachment issues than dating.

_____ As I said earlier, I know people who have had Disorganized attachment styles from horrific abuse and neglect as children who have gone on to have healthy, loving marriages despite the odds. What they all had in common was that they accepted that their relationship problems were their fault and not someone else's. They avoided turning to drugs, alcohol, or other addictive behaviors to cope with their emotional pain and suffering. They also went to therapy at least once a week for years, which enabled them to choose to be with a loving and stable partner.

_____ I would just recommend that you start a specialized type of psychotherapy called Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) first before trying to go to psychodynamic psychotherapy. DBT is specifically designed to treat the self-destructive behaviors and impulses caused by a Disorganized attachment style that make it difficult to benefit from other forms of psychotherapy. It typically takes one to two years of DBT to get the self-destructive behaviors under control so you can then start working directly on healing your attachment issue in psychodynamic psychotherapy.

_____ Then plan on spending at least a couple of years in psychodynamic psychotherapy before dating. Your therapist

can help you know when you are ready to start dating, but please realize that all this hard work has only moved you into the insecure attachment range and you will need to look [exclusively](#) for securely attached men to date and later marry.

What's *His* Attachment Style?

Now that you know your attachment style, let's take a look at his, because you will need to be able to tell something about it to know if he is a good fit for you.

Securely Attached (and Mostly Securely Attached) Men

Remember that, ideally, you will seek out a man with a secure attachment style regardless of your own attachment style. The securely attached man tends to do best in terms of being successful both professionally and personally.

Such men have stable jobs and careers, [and are](#) comfortable in relationships [as well](#). They tend to make good choices in terms of [whom](#) to marry and to avoid drama in their relationships. They lead quiet, happy lives with their families that [may](#) seem a little boring from the outside.

Insecure – Ambivalent Men

Insecure men are a little different. While they can do well in terms of job and careers, they often struggle with relationships. They tend to be anxious about their connection to you and can worry excessively about whether or not you love them. They need frequent reassurance and displays of love and commitment from you as well. Finally, they are also prone to jealousy and may struggle with fears of abandonment.

 The difference between the two types of insecurely attached men – Ambivalent versus Avoidant – is how they express their anxiety within your relationship. Ambivalent guys are loud and “get up in your grille” with their anger and jealousy. They probably won't tell you why they are angry – men often express their negative emotions such as fear, sadness, grief, and worry as anger – or admit that they are actually scared of losing you or you leaving. However, if you look at the pattern of their anger and what triggers it, you will see that they are trying to possess you and keep you constantly focused on them.

Insecure – Avoidant Men

Avoidant guys are the exact opposite of Ambivalent guys – they are subtle and usually try to hide their anxiety about losing you, but you will sense the tension and their

behavior will give it away. They tend to want to spend all their time with you and, when they are not with you, they are constantly texting or calling you on the phone. They may even stop hanging out with friends and family or their job may suffer because they spend so much time focused on you.

Most of the time, they will try to sweetly manipulate you into spending less time away from them with gifts and such. However, when that doesn't work or if they feel that you are ignoring them, their anger will surface, often in an explosive rage. Afterward, they will apologize sincerely, but the intensity of their rage may leave you shaken and a bit scared.

Disorganized Men

In contrast to the two insecure types of guys, the Disorganized guy is so severely affected by the attachment disruption that his entire life is affected, interfering with his education, career, and friendships, not just his romantic relationships. Such men tend to go to extremes, where they fall in love with you immediately and totally, but their love has no depth and they can cut you off just as quickly for trivial or even imagined reasons.

_____ In fact, such men repetitively fall hard for women, convinced that they have found their soulmate after only a few dates (or a first date). A few weeks or months later, they will suddenly cut you off, convinced that you are a con artist or were cheating on them. Such a man also makes his ex sound like the most awful person in the world, even though he thought she was a saint and walked on water when he first met her. If you were a fly on the wall, you would have seen that his ex was never as amazing as he thought and then that he over-reacted to a minor misunderstanding or disagreement.

The Separation Test

Perhaps the easiest way to identify a guy's attachment style is by looking at how he handles physical separation. The secure guy easily tolerates being apart for a few days without difficulty. He may shoot you a text or leave a voice-mail to tell you he loves you, but it's no big deal if you don't respond. Afterward, when you do see each other, you will easily move back together, almost as if you hadn't been apart.

_____ While the secure guy missed you, he was busy with other things like catching up with friends and getting projects done. He is glad to see you when you return, but

he also appreciated having some time alone. This is the healthy pattern of a secure relationship, with an easy flow, back and forth — together, apart, — and back together — like the ebb and flow of the tides or the gentle inhale and exhale of breathing during meditation.

The Ambivalent guy (Mr. Dramatic) is a little different.

First, he may resist the idea of a few days' separation. If he is unable to prevent the separation, he may try to negotiate it down to as short of a time as possible or insist on a fixed schedule of contact such as every night. He will also get upset if the scheduled contact doesn't happen as planned, — even if you have a good reason for missing it.

— Alternatively, he may try to hide his anxiety and say he's fine with being a part for a few days, but then call and text you frequently. His jealousy will come out in the form of asking lots of questions about who you were with and what you are doing. He will be especially suspicious about any interactions with other men. Finally, he won't relax and calm down without an overt display of your commitment to him.

— Another clue is that he will make you feel like you did something wrong while you were apart by not contacting

him enough or for just talking to another guy, even if it was the plumber who was fixing your sink. He will often break the separation by "dropping by" for some dubious reason or find some excuse to be wherever you are going with your friends or family. It can be so creepy that if he weren't your boyfriend, you'd swear he was stalking you.

The Avoidant guy (Mr. Aloof) has similar anxiety and fears, but he expresses them differently. Instead of protesting the separation and seeking extra contact, he will act like he's fine and the separation is no big deal, but while you are apart, he's unconsciously convincing himself that you don't really love him and the relationship is over. When you do meet again, it's as if you are just friends and he has moved on. You will have to show him some overt sign that you still love him and that you are still in a relationship together before he will relax and open up. Of course, he will be excited, but you will get the sense that he was afraid (or secretly expected) things were over.

_____ I once dated someone who really struggled with this. If we spent more than three days apart, she would become convinced that the relationship was over and I didn't love her. I could not change her mind over the phone, only in person. Nothing I could say was sufficient; only my

physical presence could calm her. More than once, I found myself driving across town to her house late at night because she was convinced I didn't love her and that we were over. Even though our relationship was otherwise great, ultimately her fears doomed us.

A Disorganized guy reacts even more extremely to the separation test. He may forbid you from going or demand that he go along. He may also break up with you on the spot if you insist on going (which you should). Alternatively, he may follow you and blatantly stalk you the entire time. If he somehow manages not to do any of these things, he will probably get stinking drunk or high the whole time you are gone. He may even cheat on you and afterward insist that you were the one who wanted to take a break so he did nothing wrong. Of course, his ultimate reaction is to accuse you of cheating during your trip; even if you somehow persuade him otherwise, he will still make you feel guilty for going.

In Review

- There are four attachment styles that govern our relationships throughout our lives, from

romantic relationships to friendships to parenting.

- The secure attachment style produces the most stable relationships and can even help heal insecure attachment styles in others over time.
- There are two anxious, insecure attachment styles, Ambivalent and Avoidant, that can still form successful relationships and marriages if they are with securely attached partners.
- The Ambivalent attachment style tends to be dramatic and is most strongly attracted to the Avoidant style, but actually does the best with a securely attached partner.
- The Avoidant style is reserved and unexpressive, and most strongly attracted to the Ambivalent style, but actually does the best with a securely attached partner.
- The Disorganized attachment style is associated with major life disruption and often requires years of therapy before being able to have successful relationships.

