

Host a thoughtful workshop

For up to 20 adult friends or acquaintances | A flexible 45-minute session

Before participants arrive

Ask everyone to **bring a charged phone or tablet**. Check the Wi-Fi and open Attachment Atlas before the session. Print **one backup set of the participant introduction, paper assessment, and self-scoring guide for every 10 people** - two sets for 20. Keep this facilitator guide for yourself; provide pencils for anyone choosing paper.



Open Attachment Atlas

Scan this code with a phone or tablet camera. It opens the introduction; choose **Begin self-assessment** when ready.

attachment-atlas-stoph.stoph.chatgpt.site

Suggested session flow

0-10 min | Conversation and introduction

Use pages 2-3. Start by finding out what people already know.

10-22 min | Optional online self-assessment

Offer all five sections. The website calculates the results; there is no separate group self-scoring period.

22-37 min | Small-group discussion

Form groups of 3-5. Use the fictional scene and prompts on page 5.

37-45 min | Bring the ideas together

Invite one observation from each group, then questions. Sharing personal scores is optional.

Keep a quiet seat or step-out option available. Participants may skip any section or keep all results private. If paper is preferred, the backup guide supports self-scoring at the person's own pace.

A ten-minute introduction

Part 1 | Ask, listen, and explain. Use the pauses for brief responses.

0:00-1:00 | What have you heard?

Ask: **"Who has heard of attachment theory? What comes to mind?"**

Take two or three short responses. Welcome familiarity and unfamiliarity alike; no personal history is needed. Say: "Today we will explore a model of close relationships and compare ideas. There are no right-person or wrong-person scores."

1:00-3:00 | Two dimensions

Ask: **"Has anyone come across the two dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance? How would you describe them?"**

Listen, then clarify: "Anxiety is about uncertainty over whether someone cares and will be available. Avoidance is about discomfort opening up or depending on someone. These can vary independently in degree; a person may be higher on one, both, or neither."

Ask: "Could someone want reassurance and also hesitate to accept closeness?" Allow a short response. The terms describe relationship feelings here, rather than psychiatric diagnoses.

3:00-5:00 | Four familiar patterns

"Secure combines lower anxiety and lower avoidance. Anxious combines higher anxiety and lower avoidance. Avoidant combines lower anxiety and higher avoidance. Anxious-Avoidant combines higher levels of both."

Ask: "What might each combination make easier or harder when asking for support?" Invite a couple of possibilities, rather than asking anyone to identify their own pattern. Explain that the names summarize regions on continuous dimensions; they do not divide everyone into four fixed kinds of person.

A useful distinction

Anxiety asks, "Will you be there for me?" Avoidance asks, "How comfortable am I relying on you?" These are teaching questions, not additional questionnaire items.

The introduction, continued

Part 2 | Connect the ideas to context, then introduce the online activity.

5:00-7:00 | One person, different relationships

"Imagine Maya finds it easy to ask her best friend for help but keeps worries to herself around her father. Those two experiences can coexist. Attachment researchers use the phrase **working models** for expectations about ourselves and other people that help shape what we notice and how we respond."

Ask: "What would we miss if we described Maya with only one label?" Accept ideas about context. We do not know Maya's history or the cause of her feelings; this scene illustrates a possibility, not a conclusion about anyone in the room.

7:00-9:00 | Why these relationships?

"The Relationship Structures questionnaire repeats nine statements for different close relationships so that context stays visible. It asks about comfort with depending on someone and worries about their care or availability. Attachment Atlas includes a separate General section, followed by Mother, Father, Partner, and Best friend."

"Mother-like and father-like figures can be your reference. For a parent who has died, you may answer about when they were alive, if comfortable. Without a current partner, you may consider your most recent meaningful relationship or imagine one if you have never had one. Every section is optional."

9:00-10:00 | Begin on your device

Ask: "What question about the model would help before we begin?" Answer one brief clarification, then show the QR code on page 1. Say: "Open Attachment Atlas and choose Begin self-assessment. Use the agree/disagree choices that fit your experience. The website will calculate your scores. Afterward, we will explore a fictional situation in small groups; you can keep your own answers and results to yourself."

Background for this script: Fraley et al. (2011), the supplied article; current ECR-RS instructions. Full citations and links are on pages 9-10.

What the research adds

Preparation notes for questions that may arise. This page need not be read aloud.

Support, exploration, and expectations

Bowlby developed attachment theory around children's need for accessible caregivers. Adult attachment research considers how related needs operate in close relationships. A trusted person can be a **safe haven** during distress and a **secure base** for exploration. Early experience can influence later expectations, but it does not mechanically determine a person's adult relationships. Later experiences may reinforce or revise expectations. [Fraley, theory overview]

Why relationship-specific questions matter

The 2011 paper argues that one broad description can hide meaningful differences between relationships. Its ECR-RS uses common items and dimensions with explicit targets, making comparisons clearer than using unrelated scales for parents, friends, and partners. Relationship-specific scores were generally more closely associated with outcomes in that relationship; broader measures were more closely associated with broad personality traits. These are associations, not proof that a score causes an outcome.

The studies used 21,838 partnered adults from a relationship-focused website and a second sample of 388 partnered adults. Both samples were predominantly women and White, and were not representative of all adults. Do not treat their averages as universal standards for this workshop.

Different across relationships is not a deficit

In these studies, variation between a person's relationship scores did not independently explain the examined outcomes once average insecurity was considered. A varied profile does not by itself show that a person is fragmented or unhealthy. The authors also noted measurement limits, including response tendencies and less sensitivity to differences at the secure end of the scales. A questionnaire is one source of information, not a complete account of a relationship.

General in this website

The 2011 study formed Global scores by combining relationship-specific scores. Attachment Atlas follows the author's later approach: General has its own nine statements and is scored separately. Do not average the other sections to recreate General or compare it directly with the paper's Global composite norms.

Sources: supplied 2011 paper; Fraley's theory overview; current ECR-RS documentation. Fraley's resources page is a directory for further learning. Links are on pages 9-10.

Make room for small groups

15 minutes | Explore an idea together without needing to share personal scores.

Choose a grouping approach

Suggested default: groups of 3-5, mixed without reference to scores. For 20 people, four groups of five works well. Invite people to discuss a fictional character, listen, or pass.

Optional alternative: offer Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, and Anxious-Avoidant discussion tables. People choose a pattern they want to understand, whether or not it resembles their own experience. A table choice is not a disclosure of someone's results. Combine small tables and allow people to change groups.

A fictional scene for every group

On a fictional island, Alex and Sam planned to meet at the harbor cafe. Sam sends: "I need to move our meeting. Could we talk tomorrow?" Alex has no further information yet. Explore one or more attachment perspectives without deciding which character has a particular style.

A simple discussion rhythm

2 minutes | Choose a perspective

Read the scene. Choose a pattern to explore, or compare two patterns. Anyone may participate as an observer.

8 minutes | Consider possibilities

What might Alex assume? What does the message actually tell us, and what remains unknown? How could reassurance, space, or both matter? Suggest a reply and explain why the character might choose it.

5 minutes | Gather one useful idea

Compare interpretations. What information could change the story? Pick one observation to bring back to the room, without naming anyone's scores or repeating personal disclosures.

Bring the room back together

Ask: "What changed when you considered another perspective?" and "What does a score leave out?" Avoid guessing other people's styles or prescribing a response for their real relationships. If a story becomes personal, thank the speaker, offer a pause, and return to the fictional scene. Close with an idea people found useful; no real-life practice is assigned.

Help people read their scores

Use privately, or discuss a fictional example without asking anyone to disclose results.

Begin with the two numbers

Read each relationship separately. Higher anxiety means more reported worry about care or availability; higher avoidance means more reported discomfort opening up or depending on someone. Lower scores mean less of that concern, not greater personal worth. Scores near the center can fit more than one description.

A 1 is the lower end and a 7 the higher end of each response scale. These are not percentages, percentiles, or grades. For example, anxiety 6 and avoidance 2 suggests exploring worry about availability alongside relative comfort with closeness; reversing those numbers changes the focus to comfort with dependence.

The suggested reading follows where your point sits relative to the center of the map. It is a starting point for reflection, not a diagnosis or a fixed identity. A small difference around the center does not establish a different kind of person; explore other descriptions whenever they fit better.

Compare context before drawing conclusions

Read General, Mother, Father, Partner, and Best friend independently. General comes from its own answers. A difference may invite questions about context; it does not identify a cause or measure the other person. NA means no score, not low insecurity. A point on the center line can be explored from either adjacent perspective.

Let the participant choose the next step

Invite a person to read, reflect privately, or use the fictional scene. Ask: "Which part fits, which part does not, and what is missing?" Use the two pages that follow to compare needs, replies, and reasons. Do not prescribe a relationship decision from a score. Keep disclosure optional and assign no real-life practice.

The same scene, different needs

On the fictional island, Alex and Sam planned to meet at the harbor cafe. Sam writes: 'I need to move our meeting. Could we talk tomorrow?' Alex has no other information yet.

The fuller descriptions and optional prompts also appear under 03 See your map and in each personal score PDF. Source notes and limitations are at the end of this guide.

Connection and reassurance

Possible experiences and optional fictional next steps. Invite exploration, not a label.

Secure | Lower anxiety and lower avoidance

You reported relatively little worry about being cared for and relatively little discomfort with relying on someone. Both connection and independence may feel possible. This does not mean that conflict, hurt, or uncertainty never happen, or that a relationship is necessarily safe.

Ask: Which experiences help closeness feel dependable? What allows you to ask for support while keeping your own preferences and boundaries?

Try with Alex: In the island scene, write a reply that combines flexibility with a clear preference. Then imagine a misunderstanding and add one sentence that invites clarification.

Alex could say: "Tomorrow works. Could we meet at the cafe at ten?"

Alex's reason: "I want to stay connected and make a clear plan without guessing why Sam rescheduled."

Anxious | Higher anxiety and lower avoidance

You reported more worry about another person's care or availability, alongside more comfort with closeness. Uncertainty may draw your attention toward reassurance or signs of rejection. You might recognize checking for meaning in a brief message, but the score alone cannot tell us what you actually do.

Ask: What is known, and what is being imagined? Can a wish for reassurance be named alongside your own needs, preferences, and limits?

Try with Alex: For Alex, write two columns: facts in Sam's message and possible interpretations. Invent two explanations besides rejection, then write one specific request for clarity.

Alex could say: "I was looking forward to seeing you. What time tomorrow works?"

Alex's reason: "I want to say that this matters to me and ask for a plan instead of treating a changed plan as proof of rejection."

These are original examples of possible replies, not predictions or prescribed scripts. Use another reply if the group can explain the need behind it.

Space, trust, and closeness

Possible experiences and optional fictional next steps. Invite exploration, not a label.

Avoidant | Lower anxiety and higher avoidance

You reported less worry about losing another person's care, but more discomfort with opening up or relying on them. Keeping feelings private or handling things alone may feel easier. This does not establish a lack of affection. Unlike the Anxious-Avoidant pattern, worry about losing connection is less prominent in these answers.

Ask: What does distance make easier? In a fictional relationship, what might be lost when a preference or feeling is left unspoken?

Try with Alex: Give Alex one preference to express and one boundary to keep. Write a reply that leaves room for contact without requiring Alex to disclose more than they choose.

Alex could say: "Tomorrow works. I'd like to keep it to half an hour; I have other plans afterward."

Alex's reason: "I want to keep our connection and be clear about the time I can offer."

Anxious-Avoidant | Higher anxiety and higher avoidance

You reported both more worry about being cared for and more discomfort with closeness or dependence. Wanting reassurance and wanting distance may coexist, or feel different in different moments. The same invitation could feel welcome and difficult. A score does not show that you behave unpredictably or explain why this tension exists.

Ask: If both connection and space matter, what would make each feel more manageable? What information or choice is missing?

Try with Alex: Give Alex two needs: a clear sign that the meeting still matters, and control over its pace. Draft a reply that asks for a plan and sets one manageable limit.

Alex could say: "I'd still like to meet. Could we have a short coffee tomorrow at ten?"

Alex's reason: "I want a definite plan and a meeting that feels manageable, so I can leave room for both connection and space."

These are original examples of possible replies, not predictions or prescribed scripts. Use another reply if the group can explain the need behind it.

Research and further reading

Keep these references for questions, preparation, and continued learning.

Start with the theory

R. Chris Fraley: Adult Attachment Theory and Research.

<https://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm>

Resources directory: further explanations, measures, and demonstrations.

<https://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/resources.html>

Official measurement resources

ECR-RS items, instructions, and scoring. R. Chris Fraley's current description of relationship-specific and general attachment measurement.

<https://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/measures/relstructures.htm>

Measurement and interpretation FAQ. Background on the ECR-R and adult attachment dimensions.

<https://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/measures/ecrr.htm>

The assessment

Fraley, R. C., Heffernan, M. E., Vicary, A. M., & Brumbaugh, C. C. (2011). The Experiences in Close Relationships-Relationship Structures questionnaire: A method for assessing attachment orientations across relationships. *Psychological Assessment*, 23(3), 615-625.

doi.org/10.1037/a0022898

Dimensions rather than fixed boxes

Fraley, R. C., Hudson, N. W., Heffernan, M. E., & Segal, N. (2015). Are adult attachment styles categorical or dimensional? A taxometric analysis of general and relationship-specific attachment orientations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Study abstract: pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25559192/

Emotion regulation and attachment

Cassidy, J. (1994). Emotion regulation: Influences of attachment relationships. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 59(2-3), 228-249.

Further reading, continued

Related measures, books, and an accessible online resource.

A related measure: DERS-16

Bjureberg, J., et al. (2016). Development and validation of a brief version of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale: The DERS-16. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 38(2), 284-296.

doi.org/10.1007/s10862-015-9514-x

This measures emotion-regulation difficulties and is not part of the ECR-RS assessment used in this workshop.

Clinical reading

Brown, D. P., & Elliott, D. S. (2016). *Attachment disturbances in adults: Treatment for comprehensive repair*. W. W. Norton & Co.

A professional treatment text, separate from this educational workshop.

Self-esteem background

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.

Self-esteem is not measured by the ECR-RS results shown in this workshop.

Facilitator-suggested reading

Sacks, P. (2020). *Love rays*. Oneosage Press.

Included as a reading suggestion, not as validation of this questionnaire.

Accessible articles

[The Attachment Project - attachmentproject.com](https://attachmentproject.com)

The supplied Attachment Project report (MindOnly Pty Ltd., copyright 2020-2024) informed the Anxious and Anxious-Avoidant explanations: PDF pages 5, 7, 12, and 17. It is a commercial educational resource, separate from validation of the ECR-RS.

Avoidant and Secure guidance is an Attachment Atlas synthesis of the two dimensions, checked against Fraley's overview. Reflection prompts and fictional replies are original educational examples, not validated treatments. The report's additional caregiver-condition scores are not measured here; these scores do not establish childhood causes, trauma, or self-esteem.