

Attachment Style Self-Assessment

An IFS-Informed Reflection



Your attachment pattern is how your system learned to navigate relationships. From an IFS perspective, these aren't fixed traits — they're protective strategies your parts developed early on.

This is what your system learned to do — not who you are.

This is an educational self-reflection tool. It is not a clinical assessment and does not constitute a diagnosis of any mental health condition or disorder. Results are intended to support self-awareness and curiosity — not to replace professional evaluation. Any clinical assessment or diagnosis should be conducted by a qualified mental health professional.

Ben Carey Donaldson is a certified IFS practitioner. He is not a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, or medical doctor. Resources on this site are educational in nature and are not a substitute for professional mental health care.

For each statement below, choose the response that feels most true for you:

1. When someone I care about needs space or time apart:

<input type="checkbox"/> A	I trust we'll reconnect when they're ready
<input type="checkbox"/> B	I panic — are they pulling away for good?
<input type="checkbox"/> C	I feel relieved — space is good
<input type="checkbox"/> D	I feel abandoned, then convince myself I don't need them anyway

2. When I'm upset or stressed:

<input type="checkbox"/> A	I reach out to someone I trust and usually feel better
<input type="checkbox"/> B	I want support but worry I'm too much or will be rejected
<input type="checkbox"/> C	I prefer to deal with it alone — asking for help feels weak
<input type="checkbox"/> D	I don't know what I need — sometimes I want closeness, sometimes isolation

3. During conflict with someone I care about:

<input type="checkbox"/> A	I can stay present and work through it
<input type="checkbox"/> B	I become very anxious — what if this is the end?
<input type="checkbox"/> C	I withdraw emotionally and wait for it to pass
<input type="checkbox"/> D	I escalate quickly or shut down completely

4. When someone lets me down:

<input type="checkbox"/> A	I feel hurt but can usually work through it with them
<input type="checkbox"/> B	It confirms my fear that people always leave or hurt me
<input type="checkbox"/> C	I pull back and rely on myself — I knew I couldn't count on them
<input type="checkbox"/> D	I react strongly — maybe end the relationship, then want them back

5. Emotional closeness generally feels:

<input type="checkbox"/> A	Natural and comfortable
<input type="checkbox"/> B	Important but anxiety-provoking — I'm always waiting for the other shoe to drop
<input type="checkbox"/> C	Uncomfortable or suffocating — I need my independence
<input type="checkbox"/> D	Chaotic and intense — I want connection but struggle to maintain it

Understanding Your Results

Count which letter you chose most often:

A = Secure • B = Anxious-Preoccupied • C = Avoidant • D = Disorganised

It's normal to see aspects of multiple patterns. Read the one you scored highest in first, then explore the others.

Mostly A — Secure Attachment

What your system learned: Closeness is generally safe. Your early relationships taught you that people can be trusted to show up.

The parts involved: You have protectors that help you set boundaries, but they don't dominate your experience. Your system has enough baseline trust to stay present even when things are hard.

Questions to explore:

- Are there specific contexts where your protectors become more active?
- What helps you return to that grounded place during conflict?

Mostly B — Anxious-Preoccupied Attachment

What your system learned: Connection is possible but fragile. Your early relationships were inconsistent, so your system learned that connection requires constant vigilance.

The parts involved: A vigilant part scans for danger, a people-pleasing part works to keep others happy, and a part that panics when closeness feels threatened. These parts believe that if they stop working, you'll be alone.

Questions to explore:

- What does the part that panics believe will happen if it stops?
- What would it need to trust that connection can exist without constant effort?

Mostly C — Avoidant-Dismissive Attachment

What your system learned: Depending on others is risky. Your early relationships taught you that emotional needs were dismissed or that closeness felt suffocating. Your system learned self-reliance as the safest strategy.

The parts involved: A part that creates distance to maintain autonomy, a part that intellectualises emotions, and a part that dismisses vulnerability as weakness. These parts protect you from the pain of unmet needs by convincing you those needs don't exist.

Questions to explore:

- What does the part that maintains distance fear might happen if it let someone closer?
- Are there exiled parts carrying the pain of early unmet needs or rejection?

Mostly D — Disorganised (Fearful-Avoidant) Attachment

What your system learned: Safety and fear came from the same place. Your early relationships were frightening or unpredictable — the person you needed was also the source of fear. Your system couldn't resolve this paradox.

The parts involved: Parts pulling in opposite directions — a part that desperately seeks connection and a part that panics when it arrives, a part that trusts and a part that expects betrayal. These parts are often in conflict, creating the push-pull dynamic that defines disorganised attachment.

Questions to explore:

- Can you identify the different parts with conflicting agendas around closeness?
- What does each of these parts fear would happen if they stopped their strategy?

What to Do with This Information

Attachment patterns aren't diagnoses — they're adaptive strategies. Your system's best attempt to navigate relationships based on what it learned early on. They're not permanent.

With IFS, we're less interested in labelling and more interested in understanding the protective strategies your parts developed — and what they might need in order to relax.

You might find it helpful to:

- Notice when your protective parts are most active in relationships
- Get curious about what they're trying to protect you from
- Ask what they fear would happen if they relaxed their strategy
- Work with a therapist to unburden the exiles carrying early relational wounds