

Saddleback Mental Health Community
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Attachment Styles and Conflict

1. Our specialty: How Attachment Styles Affect Relationships
 - There is one positive style called the *Secure Connector*.
2. Researchers identified Five Styles with disruptions in the cycle of bonding and regulating stressful situations. These patterns persisted into adulthood.
 - Avoider
 - Pleaser
 - Vacillator
 - Controller
 - Victim.
3. Before we describe these five styles, we want to acknowledge several important things:
4. How we *manage* stress is very important because a person who is stressed is dealing with difficult emotions and is dysregulated to some degree. A dysregulated person cannot help to regulate another dysregulated person. Conflict most often involves two dysregulated people.

See Chart on Attachment Styles

5. There are five common styles that we see in adults.
 - **Avoider:** Independent, Self-sufficient, Low in sympathy
 - **Stress:**
 - **Conflict:**
 - **Growth:**
 - **Pleaser:** Caretaker, Keep the peace, appease, I'm OK if you are OK.
 - **Stress:**
 - **Conflict:**
 - **Growth:**

- **Vacillator:** Craves attention, fears abandonment, idealistic, disappointed and angry.
 - **Stress:**
 - **Conflict:**
 - **Growth:**
- **Controller:** Traumatic, unpredictable, chaotic childhood. Controls to keep from experiencing unpredictability and painful childhood feelings.
 - **Stress:**
 - **Conflict:**
 - **Growth:**
- **Victim:** Traumatic, unpredictable, chaotic childhood. Learns to tolerate the intolerable. Tries to stay under the radar.
 - **Stress Response:**
 - **Conflict:**
 - **Growth:**

NOTE: The combination of two love styles colliding sets up a reactive pattern that makes communication difficult.

6. Understanding Triggers.

- **What is a trigger?**
- **Identifying your triggers:**
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
- **Goal:** When we recognize our triggers and notice they are being activated we need to:
 1. Deal with the wounds fueling your triggers.

2. Remember the person we are interacting with is not causing all the feelings we are experiencing.
3. Determine what skills you are missing to stay more engaged.
4. Tell someone who is triggering you; "I am getting triggered. Give me a few minutes to collect myself." Self-soothe using the tools below.

7. How to calm yourself in stressful situations.

- Pay attention to the tipping point. What happens inside before you lose it? If your heart rate is over one hundred you are becoming dysregulated.
- Use the 4-7-7 breathing technique for quick results, where you breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts, and exhale for 8. Smooth rhythmic breathing slows cortisol and adrenalin. Fight or flight is controlled by the Amygdala. We need to communicate with it that everything is OK
- Ask to get a glass of water or use the restroom to give you time to calm.
- Suggest a walk while listening to an upset person. Rhythmic movement calms the nervous system.
- Empathize with a dysregulated person. Empathy does not mean you agree. Nor is it the same as giving in, being passive, or allowing the other person to mistreat you. As you allow for another person to express emotion you are actually helping that person to discharge it.
 "I can see how upset you are. It will help me to listen if I take a second to breathe and calm myself."
 "I want to understand. Can we slow down so I can hear everything you have to say?"
- Lower your voice and open up and relax your body posture. If it's safe, sit on the floor or in a lower position.