

The Anxious Attachment Checklist

Trait lists ask what you are like, and memory answers flatteringly. This checklist asks something easier to verify: what you DID, in four specific situations you will recognise. Print it, and tick items while a situation is fresh -- ideally the same day. Ticks collected in the wild are worth triple the ones recalled from the sofa, because the anxious pattern is precisely a state that feels unreasonable in hindsight and completely reasonable at the time. Catch it at the time.

Who this is for: Anyone who suspects the anxious pattern but bounces off trait quizzes -- and anyone who wants a dated, honest record of what the pattern actually does rather than a score.

The four situations, plus the two readings

Situation 1 -- The slow-reply stretch

Tick what you actually did the last time replies went quiet.

Re-read the conversation looking for what I did wrong [] -- checked their last-seen or activity more than twice []
-- calculated reply-time ratios (mine vs theirs) []

Drafted a message I did not send [] -- sent a light "test" message engineered to force a reply [] -- asked a friend to interpret the silence []

Made a plan conditional on whether they replied ("if nothing by 6...") [] -- struggled to concentrate on anything else for over an hour []

Told myself it was over [] -- felt physical symptoms (chest, stomach, appetite) [] -- swung to anger at them for making me feel this []

Section count: ____ /11. Date: ____

Situation 2 -- The good patch

Tick what ran underneath the last stretch when things were going well.

Waited for the other shoe to drop [] -- re-read good messages to confirm they meant it [] -- felt a spike of dread right after especially close moments []

Preemptively lowered my expectations "to be realistic" [] -- picked a small fight after a very good day []

Needed the closeness re-confirmed within a day of it being obvious [] -- felt suspicious of why they like me []

Compared this good patch to previous ones that ended [] -- made contingency plans for it ending, in my head []

Section count: ____ /9. Date: ____

Situation 3 -- The conflict

Tick what you did during and immediately after the last real disagreement.

Could not sleep or function until it was resolved [] -- followed them to another room / kept texting to keep it going [] -- asked "are we okay?" more than once within hours []

Apologised for things I did not think were wrong to end the tension [] -- abandoned my actual point once their mood shifted []

Replayed the argument for days [] -- needed explicit confirmation the relationship survived it []

Punished with tears or despair rather than saying what I needed [] -- brought up old grievances as evidence of a pattern of them leaving []

Section count: ____ /9. Date: ____

Situation 4 -- The aftermath of an ending

Tick what you did in the months after your last significant ending.

Checked their social media regularly after the ending [] -- kept the conversation thread and re-read it [] -- constructed detailed cases for why it could still work []

Reached out after deciding not to, more than once [] -- interpreted any contact from them as reopening the question []

Lost the version of events where the relationship had real problems [] -- made my recovery conditional on their regret []

Started scanning the next person for exit signs from week one []

Section count: ____ /8. Ending was (month/year): ____

Reading the counts

Turn four dated section counts into a picture, and pick the one working front.

My four counts: S1 ____ /11, S2 ____ /9, S3 ____ /9, S4 ____ /8:

The shape, in one sentence:

My chosen front, and the site tool that works it:

Re-run date (a month out) to see whether the working front's count moves: ____

The differential: pattern, or accurate alarm?

Five checks that separate anxious attachment from a genuinely unreliable partner.

What the alarm fired at this month: ambiguity that resolved innocent, or concrete broken commitments? List both columns:

Did I run this same checklist-pattern with previous, demonstrably reliable people? [yes / no / unsure]

Does this person's behaviour cycle (warmth, withdrawal, warmth) in ways friends have independently noticed?

If my most level-headed friend saw the evidence columns, which reading would they give?

My verdict: mostly my pattern [] / mostly this situation [] / both, tangled [] -- and the next step for the verdict I ticked:

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.