

Anxious Attachment in Men: The Worksheet

The anxious pattern does not care what gender you are, but the costume it wears does. In a lot of men it does not look like clinginess at all -- it looks like going quiet and short-tempered when she takes longer to reply, picking a fight the evening after a great weekend, or a jealousy that embarrasses you even as it runs you. And it runs in secret, because "I panic when I feel someone pulling away" is not a sentence most men have ever said aloud to another man. This sheet works those two mechanisms -- the anger costume and the secrecy -- because they are exactly where the standard exercises slide off.

Who this is for: Men whose fear of losing someone comes out sideways -- as irritability, jealousy, scorekeeping or picking at small things -- and who have never told a single mate any of it.

The five exercises

1. The anger decoder

Trace three recent flashes of irritation back to what fired first.

Flash one -- what I did, and what happened in the ninety seconds before:

The fear sentence under flash one ("I was scared that ____"):

Flash two, and its fear sentence:

Flash three, and its fear sentence:

The common shape of my three fear sentences:

2. Protest behaviour, the men's edition

Identify your protest moves from the versions men actually run.

My protest moves, ticked and added:

For my most-used move: the response it is engineered to extract:

Its honest hit rate, and what it costs when it misses:

What I have never once tried instead: the direct version. What would it even say?

3. Price the secrecy

Work out what running this pattern alone actually costs you.

Who in my life knows this pattern exists? (An honest zero is the finding, not a failure.)

Hours in an average week spent on the fear -- checking, replaying, managing:

One decision in the last year the fear made for me:

What my relationship is carrying that a friendship could be carrying:

4. The disclosure ladder

Build the smallest possible first step toward being witnessed.

Rung two: my deniable sentence, drafted word for word:

Rung three: the mate, named -- and what makes him the safe pick:

Rung four: the direct sentence to my partner that replaces my top protest move:

Dates: rung two by ____, rung three by ____, rung four by ____:

After each rung: what I predicted would happen vs what happened:

5. The strong-and-scared drill

Rehearse holding both, because the either/or is the trap.

Three men I rate, and one unguarded moment I saw from each:

What each moment did to my respect for him -- honestly:

The rule I apply to them, written out:

The rule I apply to me, written out -- and the difference, defended if I can:

One place this week I could act on their rule instead of mine:

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.