

Avoidant Attachment in Women: The Worksheet

When a man keeps people at a distance, the culture has flattering words ready: private, self-made, strong and silent. When a woman does it, the words arrive pre-loaded: cold, guarded, intimidating, too independent, "hard work". Same pattern, different press. Living inside that difference creates problems the standard avoidant material never mentions: you get diagnosed by everyone you date, you learn to perform a warmth you are not feeling because its absence gets billed so fast, and somewhere in there you half-start believing the labels yourself. This sheet works the pattern AND the press.

Who this is for: Women who need more distance than the people around them expect, have heard "cold" or "intimidating" often enough to quote it flatly, and sometimes perform a warmth they are not in.

The five exercises

1. The label audit

Lay out every distance-label you have received, and sort them properly.

The full label list -- who, when, verbatim where I remember it:

The TEMPERAMENT pile, and one line defending each entry:

The PATTERN pile -- the ones that are true and cost me:

The PRESSURE pile -- the ones I am formally returning to sender:

The label that has been hardest to sort, and which pile it finally went in:

2. Performed warmth vs actual presence

Learn to tell your two warmths apart from the inside.

The performed occasion -- and where I actually was:

The present occasion -- and what was different inside:

My two-line detector, written out:

Three spot-checks this week: performance or presence?

The person who gets the most performance from me -- and whether that is a verdict on them or a habit of mine:

3. What the independence bought, and what it is still charging

A two-column ledger on the self-sufficiency, dated.

Column one -- what it bought, with dates:

Column two -- what it is charging now, with recent examples:

When was the purchase made? What was happening then?

Are the conditions that justified the purchase still in force?

My honest answer to "worth it at current rates" -- today's answer, revisable:

4. Access, on your terms

Design small openings you control completely -- doors, not demolition.

Week one door -- which, for whom, and why that person:

Prediction vs what happened:

Week two door, prediction, result:

Week three door, prediction, result:

Week four: which door was cheapest for what it opened? That one stays installed.

5. The counter-testimony file

Collect the evidence the labels left out, and keep it where you can find it.

Three times my version of care landed, testified in detail:

Two moments I registered my own wanting -- written plainly, shown to no one:

What the file says about me that the labels do not:

Quarterly re-read date, set:

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.