

The Fearful-Avoidant Checklist

The other styles can be checklisted by external situation -- what you did when replies slowed, what you did when closeness stepped up. This pattern cannot, because its defining event is internal: the swing. The same person, the same week, sometimes the same evening -- approached with everything, then walled out, then grieved, then re-approached. So this checklist tracks the swing itself, phase by phase: the approach, the wall, the flip, and the aftermath. Tick each phase while you are in it or just out of it. The completed sheet is a portrait of the mechanism no trait quiz can draw.

Who this is for: Anyone whose honest answer to "anxious or avoidant?" is "yes" -- both, alternating, about the same people -- and who wants the alternation itself on paper.

The four phases, plus the two readings

Phase 1 -- The approach

Tick what happens when the wanting is running the show.

Went from interested to consumed unusually fast ☐ -- contact felt urgent: hours mattered ☐ -- shared deep material early, then felt exposed by having shared it ☐

Idealised them noticeably (the exception, the one who gets it) ☐ -- built a future in my head before the third meeting ☐

Even mid-approach, privately catalogued what is wrong with them ☐ -- kept one exit warm while pursuing (an unanswered other option, a reason it could not work) ☐

The wanting was strongest when they were slightly out of reach ☐

Phase count: ____ /8. This phase lasted roughly: ____ (days/weeks). Date: ____

Phase 2 -- The wall

Tick what happens when the too-close alarm takes over.

Their affection started feeling like pressure [] -- physical closeness went from craved to crawling [] -- found myself irritated by things I had found endearing a week before []

Went cold or distant without announcing it [] -- picked at them or started a fight that created the distance for me []

Fantasised in detail about being free of it [] -- felt suddenly certain the approach-phase me had been deluded []

Trigger check: the wall arrived right after a moment of REAL closeness or safety [] -- after they fully matched my intensity [] -- after something touched older material (name it if I can): ____

Phase count: ____ /8. Interval since approach phase: ____ . Date: ____

Phase 3 -- The flip

Tick the mechanics of the switch itself -- the pattern's signature move.

The switch completed fast -- inside a day, sometimes inside an hour [] -- and felt like clarity arriving, not mood shifting []

The new state rewrote history: the same memories meant different things by evening [] -- I could not really access how the previous state had felt, only that I had been wrong []

Something specific tripped it (a step closer from them, a step back, a smell of an old situation): named if possible: ____

I acted on the new certainty quickly (sent the message, cancelled the thing, ended it, un-ended it) [] -- and the action outlived the certainty []

Phase count: ____ /6. Direction of this flip: toward [] / away []. Date and rough hour: ____

Phase 4 -- The aftermath

Tick what the completed swings leave behind.

I no longer fully trust my own feelings about the person -- either direction [] -- I have apologised for both closeness and distance in the same month []

They have become wary around me in a way I recognise I built [] -- or: I ended it and have grieved it in swings too []

I can defend both "it was real" and "I invented it" with equal evidence []

I am braced for my own next swing more than for anything they might do []

Exhaustion is the biggest feeling in the room []

Phase count: ____ /7. Date: ____

Reading the sheet

Assemble the phases into the mechanism, and extract the two numbers that matter.

My phase counts: P1 ____ /8, P2 ____ /8, P3 ____ /6, P4 ____ /7:

My interval, from the dates: approach to wall is typically ____:

My trigger profile, in one sentence (what reliably trips the flip):

The forecast, written plainly: "After ____, expect the wall within ____, tripped most likely by ____:"

Next tool, booked like an errand: fearful-avoidant worksheet [] / disorganised workbook [] / therapist [] -- date:

The differential: this pattern, or something else?

Five checks against the lookalikes -- anxious-with-shutdowns, and mood-driven cycling.

My walls follow closeness/safety ☐ or follow overwhelm and flooding ☐ -- citing actual instances:

Between swings, is there a stable baseline of wanting connection (anxious signature) or does the direction itself keep reversing (this pattern)?

Do the swings touch everything (mood, energy, work, all people) ☐ or concentrate on attachment figures specifically ☐?

Do they run on the other person's moves (approach/retreat) ☐ or on their own clock regardless ☐?

Verdict: fearful-avoidant ☐ / mostly anxious ☐ / possibly mood-driven -- GP first ☐ -- and the honest next step:

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.