

Healing Fearful-Avoidant Attachment: A Workbook

Fearful-avoidant attachment is not a midpoint between anxious and avoidant. It is both systems, live at once, taking turns — which is why advice written for either one produces the opposite result about half the time. Told to reach out, you reach out from the anxious state and then recoil from what you sent. Told to take space, you take it from the deactivated state and lose the relationship you actually wanted.

Who this is for: You want closeness intensely and then find it unbearable, sometimes within the same day, and you have stopped trusting your own read on what you want.

The exercises

1. The state card

Two columns you can read in ten seconds while it is happening.

Activated — body, thoughts, urge, belief about them:

Deactivated — body, thoughts, urge, belief about them:

The tell that distinguishes them fastest for me:

Where I will keep this card so I can actually reach it:

2. Mapping the switch

Find what flips you, in both directions.

Direction — toward closeness or away from it?

What immediately preceded the switch:

How long did the new state last?

End of month: the trigger that appears most often in each direction:

3. The 48-hour rule

Put a gap between the state and the consequence.

What I wanted to do, written out in full:

Which state was I in when I wrote it?

Forty-eight hours later — which state am I in now?

Does the other version of me agree with this? If no, what does it want instead?

4. The two repairs

You need one for each direction, and they are not interchangeable.

After withdrawing: "I went quiet. What was happening was _____. What I want is _____."

After intensity: "I came at that hard. What was underneath it was _____. What I want is _____."

What I habitually add that I should cut:

Which of the two do I find harder, and what does that tell me?

5. The steady-state record

Collect evidence from the times you are neither.

Written on a neutral day. What I actually want here:

What is genuinely good, stated plainly:

What is genuinely not good, stated equally plainly:

One line I would want the activated version of me to read, and one for the deactivated version:

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.