CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN ACCORDING TO ATTACHMENT STYLES

SECURE

Seeks Closeness More

ANXIOUS/AMBIVALENT

CHILD

Is slow to warm to others, insecure and stressed, anxious or aggressive, cannot rely on needs being met, craves intimacy but does not feel secure in relationships

PARENT

Angry or indifferent, inconsistent, sometimes sensitive, sometimes neglectful, who creates insecure bond

CHILD

Feels safe to explore, happy and confident, content and engaged, trusts needs will be met, comfortable in relationships and easily sets boundaries

PARENT

Responsive, sensitive, consistent, secure base who creates positive emotional bond

Low

Anxiety & Fear of Abandonment

High

PARENT

Is distant or disengaged, critical or dismissive, irritable, punishing, and fails to attune or bond

CHILD

Is not explorative, believes needs probably will not be met, emotionally distant, quiet and/or withdrawn, acts out, not comfortable in relationships

AVOIDANT

PARENT

Has extreme moods, can be frightening, passive, or unpredictable, creates trauma bonds

CHILD

Is passive or nonresponsive, has difficulty making friends, angry or scared, oppositional, depressed, vacillates between wanting and avoiding relationships

DISORGANIZED/FEARFUL

Seeks Closeness Less

ON ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Seeks Closeness More

SECURE

I'm okay. You're okay.

Self-sufficient,
cooperative
and flexible,
comfortable
with intimacy,
attunes to others
with accuracy,
communicates
directly, wants
interdependent
relationships,
trusts easily

ANXIOUS/AMBIVALENT

I'm not okay. You're okay.

Overly-involved,
dependent
and sensitive,
wants excessive
intimacy, difficulty
communicating
their needs
directly, clings to
relationships, may
act out
when upset

Low

Relationship Anxiety

High

Strongly
independent and
self-reliant, can
be dismissive,
uncomfortable
with intimacy, lack
of communication,
fails to attune,
emotionally
distant

I'm okay. You're not okay.

AVOIDANT

Fearful of intimacy but wants approval from others, sees themselves as flawed and unworthy, uncomfortable communicating, sees relationships as painful and expects to be hurt

I'm not okay. You're not okay.

DISORGANIZED/FEARFUL

Seeks Closeness Less