

Healing Your Anxious Preoccupied Attachment Style

A Professional Therapeutic Workbook

8 Evidence-Based Exercises to Build Secure Attachment

Welcome to your personal healing journey. This workbook has been carefully crafted using over 50 years of attachment research and therapeutic practice. Each worksheet is designed to gently rewire the patterns that have kept you anxious in relationships and guide you steadily toward **secure, loving connection** — with others and with yourself.

■ About This Workbook

- Based on Attachment Theory (Bowlby, Ainsworth) & Internal Family Systems
- Incorporates CBT, DBT, Somatic, and Mindfulness approaches
- Designed for daily or weekly practice — consistency is the key
- Each exercise builds on the previous for maximum impact
- Safe to use alone or alongside therapy

■■ **Important:** *This workbook is a therapeutic tool, not a replacement for professional mental health care. If you are experiencing severe anxiety or depression, please seek support from a licensed therapist.*

Core Beliefs Inventory

■ *Goal: Identify the negative core beliefs driving your anxious attachment*

Our attachment patterns are rooted in **core beliefs** formed in childhood. The anxious preoccupied style is often driven by beliefs like 'I am not enough' or 'People I love will leave me.' Identifying these beliefs is the first step to transforming them.

PART A — Recognise Your Core Beliefs

Check ALL the beliefs that feel true for you, even partially:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ I am not good enough | ☐ I am unlovable |
| ☐ I will be abandoned | ☐ I need others to feel okay |
| ☐ If I'm not perfect, I'll be rejected | ☐ My feelings are too much |
| ☐ I have to earn love | ☐ I am needy / clingy |
| ☐ People always leave eventually | ☐ I can't trust my own feelings |
| ☐ I must keep the peace to be safe | ☐ Conflict means the end |

Other beliefs I notice in myself:

PART B — Tracing the Belief

Where did you first learn this belief? (age / situation / person)

What evidence from childhood 'proved' this belief to you?

How has this belief protected you in the past?

What has this belief cost you in your relationships?

■ **Therapist Tip:** Core beliefs are not facts — they are stories the brain learned to keep you safe. Awareness of the story is the beginning of freedom from it.

Nervous System Regulation Tool Kit

■ *Goal: Build your personal menu of co-regulation & self-regulation strategies*

Anxious attachment is a **nervous system pattern**. When triggered, your body floods with cortisol and adrenaline, making rational thought almost impossible. Before you can change thoughts or behaviours, you must be able to calm your nervous system. This worksheet helps you build a reliable, personalized toolkit.

PART A — Know Your Triggers

Rate how often each situation triggers your anxiety (1 = rarely, 5 = always):

Trigger Situation	Rating
Partner takes longer than usual to reply	1 2 3 4 5
Partner seems distant or preoccupied	1 2 3 4 5
Plans change unexpectedly	1 2 3 4 5
Partner spends time with others	1 2 3 4 5
You feel uncertain about where you stand	1 2 3 4 5
After a disagreement or conflict	1 2 3 4 5
Partner doesn't show affection publicly	1 2 3 4 5
Sensing emotional withdrawal	1 2 3 4 5

PART B — Your Regulation Toolkit

For each category below, write 2–3 strategies that work FOR YOU. Test them this week and note which feel most grounding.

■ **Breath & Body** (e.g., 4-7-8 breathing, cold water on face, humming)

■ **Movement** (e.g., walking, stretching, shaking the body)

■ **Cognitive Anchors** (e.g., a mantra, a grounding phrase, a memory)

■ **Co-Regulation** (safe people, pets, comforting objects)

■ **Therapist Tip:** Practice your regulation tools *BEFORE* you are triggered — so your brain has them as pathways when the nervous system floods.

The Protest Behaviour Interrupt

■ *Goal: Recognise and stop self-defeating protest behaviours before they damage connection*

When anxiously attached individuals feel threatened, they often engage in **protest behaviours** — actions designed (unconsciously) to get the partner's attention or reaction. These include excessive texting, picking fights, withdrawing to provoke pursuit, or making threats. While understandable, they create the very distance they fear. This worksheet helps you interrupt that cycle.

PART A — My Protest Behaviour Audit

Check the ones you recognise in yourself:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Send multiple unanswered texts | ☐ Pick a fight to feel connected |
| ☐ Give the silent treatment | ☐ Make veiled threats about leaving |
| ☐ Stalk social media for clues | ☐ Seek reassurance then distrust it |
| ☐ Act cold/distant to get a reaction | ☐ Catastrophise out loud |
| ☐ Check their location repeatedly | ☐ Bring up past hurts mid-argument |
| ☐ Threaten to end the relationship | ☐ Post to make them jealous |

Other protest behaviours I notice:

PART B — The STOP-CHOOSE Technique

1. NOTICE	The urge — 'I feel the pull to [behaviour].' Name it without acting.
2. PAUSE	Take 3 slow breaths. Give yourself 30 minutes before responding.
3. IDENTIFY	What do I actually NEED right now? (connection, reassurance, comfort?)
4. CHOOSE	One healthy action that honours my need without protest. What is it?
5. REFLECT	After: what happened? Did my healthy choice serve the relationship?

Practice scenario — write out a recent trigger and apply each step:

■ **Therapist Tip:** Protest behaviours are not 'bad' — they were once survival strategies. Greet them with compassion, then choose differently.

Reparenting Your Inner Child

■ *Goal: Heal the root wound that created your anxious attachment*

Your anxious attachment style was created by a younger version of you trying to survive an environment where love felt **inconsistent, conditional, or threatening to lose**. Reparenting means becoming the loving, consistent caregiver for that inner child — the one they needed but didn't fully have.

PART A — Meet Your Inner Child

How old is the part of you that gets most triggered in relationships?

What was this child most afraid of?

What did this child desperately need to hear but rarely did?

What coping strategies did this child develop to feel safer?

PART B — Write a Letter to Your Inner Child

Write a compassionate letter from your adult self to the child within. Begin with: *'Dear little [your name], I see you. I know you've been so scared that...'*

PART C — Daily Reparenting Affirmations

Say these aloud, hand on heart, every morning for 30 days:

“ I am safe. I am loved. I am enough — exactly as I am. ”

“ My feelings are valid and I can handle them with care. ”

“ I am worthy of consistent, secure love. ”

“ I do not have to earn love. I am inherently lovable. ”

“ I can soothe myself and I can reach out — I have both options. ”

Write your own personalised reparenting affirmation:

■ **Therapist Tip:** *Reparenting is not about blaming your caregivers — it is about taking responsibility for giving yourself what you needed then, and still need now.*

The Anxious Attachment Thought Record

■ *Goal: Challenge and reframe the catastrophic thoughts that fuel your anxiety*

Anxious attachment creates **cognitive distortions** — thought patterns that feel absolutely true but are actually filtered through a lens of fear. This CBT-based thought record helps you examine the evidence, challenge distortions, and build more balanced, secure thinking.

HOW TO USE THIS RECORD

Complete this record whenever you notice an anxious thought spike (ideally within 1–2 hours of the event). Use it at least 3×/week.

STEP	QUESTION	YOUR RESPONSE
1 SITUATION	What happened? (Just the facts — no interpretation)	
2 HOT THOUGHT	What is the most upsetting thought you had? (Rate belief 0–100%)	
3 EMOTIONS	What emotions did you feel? (Rate intensity 0–100%)	
4 BODY	Where did you feel it in your body?	
5 EVIDENCE FOR	What evidence supports this thought?	
6 EVIDENCE AGAINST	What evidence contradicts this thought? (Be a fair witness to yourself)	
7 COGNITIVE DISTORTION	Which thinking error applies? (Catastrophising / Mind-reading / All-or-nothing / Emotional reasoning)	
8 BALANCED THOUGHT	Write a more balanced, compassionate thought. (Rate new belief 0–100%)	
9 OUTCOME	How do you feel now? (Rate emotions again) What will you do differently?	

■ **Therapist Tip:** The goal is not 'positive thinking' — it is **accurate thinking**. A fair witness to yourself sees both the fear AND the evidence of safety.

Identifying Needs & Setting Loving Boundaries

■ *Goal: Learn to communicate your needs clearly without fear or aggression*

Anxiously attached people often have difficulty identifying and expressing their needs clearly, swinging between **suppressing needs** (to avoid rejection) and **over-expressing them** in moments of desperation. Healthy relationships require you to know what you need and ask for it with dignity and calm.

PART A — My Core Relational Needs

Rank your top 5 needs (circle or number them):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ☐ Emotional availability | ☐ Physical affection | ☐ Verbal reassurance |
| ☐ Quality time | ☐ Consistency & reliability | ☐ Open communication |
| ☐ To be prioritised | ☐ Conflict resolution | ☐ Space to express feelings |
| ☐ Acts of care / service | ☐ Intellectual connection | ☐ Shared future vision |

My #1 unmet need in past relationships has been:

I have struggled to ask for this because:

PART B — Needs Script Builder

Use this formula to express a need clearly and non-blamefully. Practice writing it here, then say it out loud before using it.

FORMULA COMPONENT	EXAMPLE	YOUR SCRIPT
When... (neutral observation)	When I don't hear from you all day...	When...
I feel... (emotion word only)	I feel anxious and disconnected.	I feel...
Because... (your story, not blame)	Because closeness matters deeply to me.	Because...
What I need is... (specific request)	What I need is one check-in text by evening.	What I need is...
Are you able to do that? (consent, not demand)	Can you commit to that?	Are you able to...

■ **Therapist Tip:** Needs are not weaknesses — they are the architecture of intimacy. Expressing them calmly builds trust; suppressing them builds resentment.

Building a Secure Sense of Self

■ *Goal: Develop identity, self-worth and autonomy independent of relationship status*

Anxious attachment often involves an **enmeshed identity** — your sense of worth, safety and even self fluctuates based on your partner's mood and presence. Healing requires building a stable, secure inner foundation so that relationships *add* to your life rather than *define* it.

PART A — The Identity Inventory

List 10 qualities you value in YOURSELF (not what others say about you):

List 5 things you are proud of achieving entirely on your own:

What are you deeply interested in or passionate about, just for you?

Who am I when I am NOT in a relationship?

PART B — The 3-Pillar Autonomy Plan

Secure people maintain three pillars of self independent of their partner. Plan one concrete action for each pillar this week.

■■■■■ Social Pillar

A friendship or community outside the relationship

■ Purpose Pillar

A goal, project or skill that is entirely your own

■ Self-Care Pillar

A practice that nourishes your body, mind or spirit

PART C — Weekly Self-Date

Commit to one 'self-date' per week — an activity you do **ALONE** that you genuinely enjoy. This builds tolerance for solitude and proves to your nervous system that being alone is safe.

My self-date this week:

How did it feel? What did I notice?

■ **Therapist Tip:** The goal is not to need your partner less — it is to **choose** them from fullness rather than reach for them from emptiness.

Secure Attachment Visualisation & Future Self Letter

■ *Goal: Neurologically install the secure attachment pattern through guided imagery*

The brain cannot fully distinguish between a **vividly imagined experience** and a real one. Regular visualisation of secure relating literally builds new neural pathways, making secure behaviour easier over time. Practice this exercise daily for maximum impact.

PART A — Guided Visualisation Script

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Take 5 slow breaths. Then read (or record and listen to) the script below:

Imagine yourself in a relationship that feels completely safe. Your partner is present, warm, and consistent. You feel confident in their love. When they are busy, you feel settled — you trust they will return. When you have a need, you express it calmly and they respond with care. When conflict arises, you both navigate it with respect and repair. You feel whole — loved and loving, connected yet free. You are secure. You are enough. You are home in yourself.

PART B — Reflection After Visualisation

What images or feelings came up during the visualisation?

What felt most unfamiliar or challenging to imagine?

What would need to shift inside you to make this feel possible?

PART C — Letter from Your Future Secure Self

Write a letter from 3 years in the future — from the version of you who has done the work and now lives with secure attachment. What do they want you to know today?

Dear [current name], I am writing to you from a place of peace. I want you to know that all the work you are doing right now...

■ **Therapist Tip:** Visualise for 5–10 minutes every morning before checking your phone. The subconscious most receptive in the hypnagogic state upon waking.

The Daily Secure Attachment Check-In

■ *Goal: Build self-awareness and consolidate progress through daily reflection*

Consistency is the engine of change. This daily check-in takes **5–10 minutes** and is the single most powerful habit you can build alongside these worksheets. Use it every evening for at least 90 days to rewire your attachment system.

EVENING DAILY CHECK-IN (Copy or photograph this page)

DATE:	_____	OVERALL MOOD:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
TRIGGER TODAY?	Yes / No	INTENSITY (1–10):	_____

One situation today that triggered my anxious attachment:

The story my anxious brain told me:

The protest behaviour I noticed (or was tempted by):

What I chose to do differently today:

One thing I did to nurture my OWN needs today:

Evidence I collected today that I AM safe and loved:

A win — however small — I want to celebrate:

Tomorrow I will practise:

WEEKLY RATING SCALES

This week my overall anxiety in relationships was:

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low									High

This week my sense of self-worth was:

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Low									High

This week I felt secure in my relationship(s):

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not at all									Very secure

This week I expressed needs clearly and calmly:

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Never									Always

■ **Therapist Tip:** Track your weekly ratings over time. Progress is rarely linear — what matters is the overall trend across 8–12 weeks.

You Are Doing The Bravest Work

Healing your attachment style is one of the most profound gifts you can give yourself — and every relationship you will ever have.

- Consistency beats intensity — 5 minutes daily beats 2 hours once a week.
- Progress is not linear. Setbacks are data, not failure.
- You are not broken — you are a person with a learned survival strategy that is ready to evolve.
- Secure attachment is a skill, not a personality type. It can be learned at any age.
- Be as patient with yourself as you would be with someone you deeply love.

Recommended Reading & Resources

- Attached — Amir Levine & Rachel Heller
- Hold Me Tight — Dr. Sue Johnson (EFT)
- The Body Keeps the Score — Bessel van der Kolk
- Wired for Love — Stan Tatkin
- Personal Development School — Thais Gibson (attachment-focused online community)

This workbook was created with care. You deserve secure love. Keep going.