What Is Your Attachment Type?

Hazan and Shaver (1987) have investigated attachment types in adults. They had three sets of statements relating to attachment in adults printed in a newspaper. They analyzed the responses they obtained and determined that the percentages of each attachment type in the adult population are roughly the same as Ainsworth found in young children. Although this study cannot establish cause and effect, these findings suggest that an event occurring very early in life, in fact, so early that we cannot remember that period of our lives, continues to exert a profound effect on our relationships throughout life.

Circle the statement that best describes how you feel about your relationships.

A. I find it relatively easy to get close to other people. I am comfortable depending on other people and having them depend on me. I don’t usually worry about being abandoned or about having someone get too close to me.

B. I find it difficult to trust people completely. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. I feel nervous when people start to get too close. Often, I feel like people want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on other people.

C. I find that other people are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that someone I am close to doesn’t really love me or won’t want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this sometimes scares people away.

Adapted from:

Explanation of Attachment Types:

A. Secure- 56 percent of adults responding to a newspaper survey had a secure attachment type. People with secure attachment types were likely to believe in romantic love which, although it might wax and wane over the course of a relationship, can also remain very intense, as good as it was at the start.

B. Avoidant- 25 percent of adults responding to a newspaper survey had an avoidant attachment type. They were more likely to believe that romantic love doesn’t really exist, and that love doesn’t last forever. They tended to find it hard to find someone they could really fall in love with.

C. Anxious/Ambivalent- 19 percent of adults responding to a newspaper survey had an anxious/ambivalent attachment type. They were more likely to believe that romantic love doesn’t really exist, that love doesn’t last forever. They found it harder (than secure types) to find someone they could love. They reported falling in and out of love more often than secure or avoidant types.

Interestingly, when Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) classified attachment styles of toddlers (using the “strange situation”), they found approximately the same percentages of each type of attachment that Hazan and Shaver found in adults. Possibly the attachment style that we adopt early in life stays with us throughout our entire lives. Our earliest attachments with our caretakers may set the pattern for all of our other attachments!