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A Review of the Clinical Utility and Psychometric Properties of the Experience in Close Relationships - Short Form (ECR-S): Norms, Percentile Rankings, and Qualitative Descriptors

The Experience in Close Relationships Scale - Short Form (ECR-S) developed by Wei et al. (2007) is a widely-used 12-item self-report measure that assesses adult romantic attachment patterns across two primary dimensions: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. This technical review synthesises current research on the ECR-S's psychometric properties and provides clinicians with comprehensive normative data, percentile rankings, and qualitative descriptors. We present a novel pattern analysis system for interpreting attachment styles and offer specific recommendations based on attachment profiles. This document aims to enhance the clinical utility of the ECR-S through evidence-based interpretative guidelines and practical implementation strategies.

View the ECR-S on NovoPsych.com.au

December 2024

Developer

The Experience of Close Relationships - Short Form (ECR-SF) was developed by Wei et al. (2007):

> Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR)-short form: reliability, validity, and factor structure. Journal of Personality Assessment, 88(2), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041

This document was developed by NovoPsych to review contemporary literature and to describe original scoring methodologies and to provide interpretation material, enhance normative data and provide qualitative descriptors.

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Description

The Experience in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form (ECR-S) is a 12-item self-report measure designed to assess adult attachment patterns in romantic relationships, representing a more concise version of the original 36-item ECR (Wei et al., 2007). Built upon contemporary attachment theory, the ECR-S evaluates how individuals think, feel, and behave in romantic relationships, particularly focusing on attachment-related anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

The ECR-S measures a two-dimensional structure of adult romantic attachment:

1. Anxiety - assessing fear of rejection and abandonment, need for approval, and distress over relationships
2. Avoidance - measuring discomfort with closeness, dependency, and intimate self-disclosure

For clinicians, the ECR-S offers several distinct benefits. Its brief format makes it ideal for routine clinical assessment, taking only minutes to complete while providing robust insights into relationship functioning. The measure helps clinicians quickly identify attachment-related difficulties at the core of relationship discord, as well as broader attachment themes that may impact interpersonal style or therapeutic alliance.

The ECR-S particularly excels in couple therapy and relationship counselling contexts. It helps clinicians understand each partner's attachment style, anticipate relationship dynamics, and tailor interventions accordingly. For instance, identifying high attachment anxiety in one partner and high avoidance in another can help explain pursuit-withdrawal patterns and inform specific therapeutic strategies. The measure's focus on current romantic relationships also makes it especially relevant for addressing presenting relationship difficulties and developing targeted treatment plans.

As well as assessing current relational patterns, the ECR-R can be used retrospectively whereby a respondent recalls how they felt during previous romantic attachments, and responds accordingly.

Psychometric Properties

The ECR-S was derived from the 36-item ECR by Brennan et al. (1998). Wei et al. (2007) demonstrated the ECR-S's robust psychometric properties through six validation studies. The scale showed satisfactory internal consistency across studies with coefficient alphas ranging from .77 to .86 for the Anxiety subscale and .78 to .88 for the Avoidance subscale. Test-retest reliability over a 1-month period was strong, with coefficients of .80 and .83 for Anxiety and Avoidance subscales respectively. The factor structure analysis confirmed two relatively orthogonal dimensions (Anxiety and Avoidance) that provided a good fit to the data after removing response sets, with CFI values ranging from .95 to .97 across studies.

Consistent with the attachment theory predictions, the construct validity of the ECR-S was supported by the positive association of attachment anxiety with emotional reactivity and the positive association of attachment avoidance with emotional cutoff (Wei et al. 2007). Convergent validity was established through correlation analyses with various tests (Wei et al. 2007): Excessive reassurance seeking was significantly associated with attachment anxiety but not with attachment avoidance. Depression was significantly associated with both attachment anxiety and avoidance.

Normative data from college students collected by Wei et al. (2007) has been synthesised to produce means and standard deviations for scores and subscales. The primary sample consisted of 851 undergraduate students from a large public university. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 45 years (M = 20.36 years, SD = 2.04).

- Anxiety Subscale (6 items; M = 21.73, SD = 7.04)
- Avoidance Subscale (6 items; M = 16.28, SD = 6.97)

NovoPsych determined descriptors for each of the attachment scores that are determined by percentiles. The percentile ranges chosen were consistent with previous attachment researchers (e.g., Kaitz et al., 2004; Mayseless & Scher, 2000; Rain et al., 2016):

- 'High' scores: 75th percentile or more
- 'Low' scores: 25th percentile or less
- 'Average' scores: 26th-74th percentile

The NovoPsych version of the ECR-S employs a sophisticated pattern analysis system that examines the interplay between avoidant and anxious attachment dimensions. These attachment patterns were developed by three PhD level psychologists with extensive clinical experience (Hegarty, D., Smyth, C., Buchanan, B., 2024). The analysis generates attachment pattern interpretations based on specific combinations of scores across dimensions. Patterns focus on the fundamental interaction between anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions, categorising individuals into broader attachment styles. For example:

- Secure Style (avoidance and anxiety both below 75th percentile)
- Fearful-Avoidant Style (high avoidance, high anxiety: both above 75th percentile)
- Dismissing Style (high avoidance, low anxiety)
- Preoccupied Style (low avoidance, high anxiety)

This dual-level pattern analysis system, supported by empirical attachment research (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998), provides both the specificity needed for clinical intervention and the broader categorical framework useful for research and general understanding of attachment organisation.

Scoring & Interpretation

Scores for the ECR-S consist of two main attachment dimensions, Attachment Avoidance and Attachment Anxiety. The scoring system reflects distinct patterns of relating in close relationships:

- **Attachment Avoidance** (6 items; score range: 6 to 36): High scores indicate strong discomfort with closeness and dependency in relationships, manifesting as emotional distance, excessive self-reliance, and reluctance to share personal feelings or rely on others. Individuals with high avoidance tend to maintain rigid emotional boundaries and may employ defensive strategies to protect against perceived relationship threats.

- **Attachment Anxiety** (6 items; score range: 6 to 36): High scores reflect intense fears about relationship stability and partner availability, manifesting as hypervigilance to relationship cues, excessive need for reassurance, and difficulty maintaining emotional equilibrium when partners are unavailable. Individuals with high anxiety tend to seek excessive closeness and validation from relationship partners.

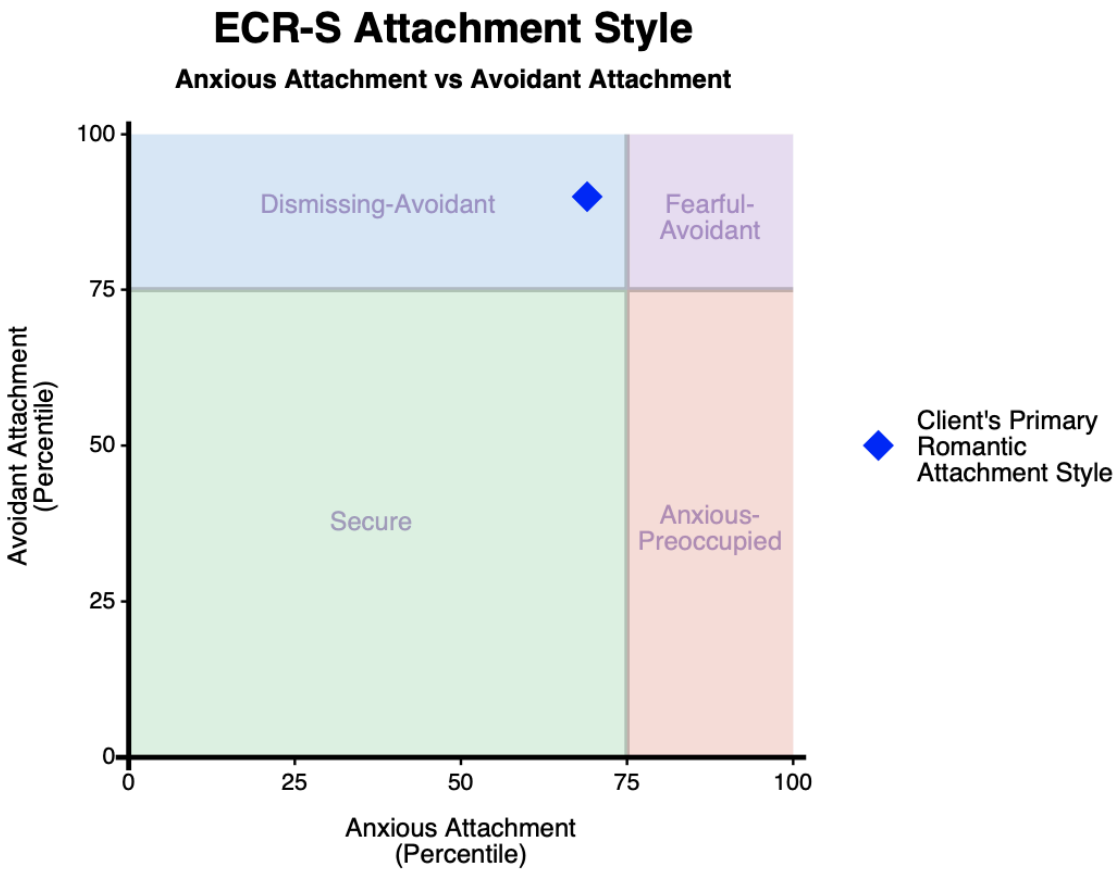
Attachment Style

	Raw Score (6 to 42)	Percentile	Descriptor
Avoidant Attachment	23	90	High
Anxious Attachment	26	69	Average

Each score is converted to a percentile based on normative data, and descriptors (Low, Average, High) are assigned based on percentile ranges:

- Low: 25th percentile or below
- Average: 26th to 74th percentile
- High: 75th percentile or above

Percentiles are computed based on an undergraduate sample, where a percentile of 50 represents typical patterns of responding. The normative sample was undergraduate students.



The interpretative text includes the Primary Attachment Pattern Analysis. This pattern analysis is based upon the specific combination of score descriptors (Low, Average, High) across both dimensions. These patterns range from secure styles (e.g., "Secure Style") to various insecure patterns (e.g., "Fearful-Avoidant Style", "Dismissing Style", "Preoccupied Style"). Each pattern provides specific insights into attachment organisation and relationship dynamics, along with associated therapeutic implications and approaches. The interpretation considers interactions between the avoidant and anxious dimensions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the person's attachment style and its implications for relationships and therapeutic work. The specificity of the overall Attachment Pattern allows for highly tailored therapeutic recommendations and insights into potential treatment challenges and opportunities.

Supporting Information

Percentile Calculations

This section details the community norms for the ECR-S. Table 1 shows the percentiles for the community sample.

NovoPsych has computed community percentiles using data from Wei et al. (2007; see Table 7, p. 198). The mean and standard deviations from an undergraduate sample were used to calculate percentiles according to the following equation:

$$\text{Percentile} = 100 \times \Phi(x - M)/SD)$$

Where:

- x is the score
- M is the mean
- SD is the standard deviation
- Φ is the standard normal cumulative distribution function

This equation first standardises the score to a z-score by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation, then converts the z-score to a percentile by applying the standard normal cumulative distribution function and multiplying by 100. The percentiles contextualise each score relative to typical scores among those in the community sample, offering a clear perspective on how the respondent's level of romantic attachment compares to those of their peers. The calculated percentiles are presented in Table 1 below.

Percentile Table

Table 1. Percentile table for both subscales of the ECR-S

	AVOIDANT	ANXIOUS	
Range	7 to 42	7 to 42	
M	14.97	22.45	
SD	6.4	7.14	
Score	**Percentile**	**Percentile**	**Descriptor**
7	11	1.5	
8	14	2	
9	18	3	
10	22	4	
11	27	5	
12	32	7	Low
13	38	9	
14	44	12	
15	50	15	
16	56	18	
17	62	22	
18	68	27	
19	74	31	Average
20	78	37	

21	83	42	
22	86	47	
23	90	53	
24	92	59	
25	94	64	
26	96	69	
27	97	74	
28	98	78	
29	99	82	
30	99.1	85	
31	99.4	88	
32	99.6	91	
33	99.8	93	
34	99.9	95	
35	99.91	96	High
36	99.95	97	
37	99.97	98	
38	99.98	98.5	
39	99.99	99	
40		99.3	
41		99.5	
42		99.7	

Interpretive Text

Interpretive text for the ECR-S is determined by a ‘pattern key’ from the avoidant and anxious subscales. The pattern keys are determined by the descriptor for the avoidant and anxious subscales, resulting in a two word combination key with nine possible combinations (i.e., ‘high_high’, ‘high_average’, ‘high_low’, etc.). This creates the basis for the text in the Interpretation section and the ‘Primary Attachment Pattern Analysis’. This analysis results in interpretive text under the following subtitles and the nine potential pattern combinations are presented below:

- Primary Pattern name (see 'name' in code): This categorical name provides clinicians with an immediate understanding of the client's primary romantic attachment style (e.g., "Fearful-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style"). It summarises the key characteristics of the pattern in relation to romantic relationships.

- Pattern Key (see subsection titles in code): This is the combination of the avoidant attachment descriptor (displayed first) and the anxious attachment descriptor (displayed last). These are determined by the percentiles (Low: 0-25.99, Average: 26-74.99, High: 75-100) and determine which interpretive text is provided.
- Summary (see 'summary' in code): This provides an overview of the romantic attachment style and its implications for the client's intimate relationships. The summary presents key characteristics of how this attachment pattern manifests in romantic relationships and forms the first paragraph of the Interpretation section.
- Interpersonal Implications (see 'interpersonal' in code): This section details how the client's attachment style impacts their romantic relationships, including typical relationship dynamics, emotional engagement patterns, and relationship maintenance strategies.
- Therapeutic Considerations (see 'therapeutic' in code): This provides guidance on potential therapeutic focus areas for someone with this romantic attachment style, including key areas for clinical attention and priority intervention targets.
- Partner Patterns (see 'partner_patterns' in code): This section focuses specifically on patterns of partner selection and relationship maintenance. It provides clinicians with understanding of how the attachment style influences partner choice and relationship dynamics over time. This addition is supported by research showing that attachment patterns significantly influence partner selection and relationship maintenance strategies in romantic relationships. Note this section is *currently hidden on report output* for some pattern types (i.e., Average_Average, Average_Low, Low_Average, and Low_Low) simply because there is minimal clinically relevant information to convey with these pattern types.

'High_High' =>

'summary' => "This pattern reveals a significantly conflicted romantic attachment style characterised by both high avoidance and high anxiety, often termed 'fearful-avoidant' attachment. In romantic relationships, these individuals simultaneously desire close emotional connection while fearing both intimacy and abandonment. The responses indicate a tendency to experience intense internal conflict about relationships, finding both closeness and distance threatening. This pattern typically develops from early experiences where intimate relationships were experienced as both vital and potentially dangerous, leading to difficulty trusting partners despite strong desires for connection.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships typically demonstrate marked instability and internal conflict, characterised by push-pull dynamics where individuals alternate between pursuing closeness and withdrawing when it's achieved. The respondent may struggle with maintaining consistent emotional intimacy with partners and tend to idealise new relationships initially, sometimes followed by rapid devaluation when partners become too close. They may experience strong fear responses to both emotional intimacy and perceived abandonment, making it difficult to trust partner declarations of love or commitment. Their relationships can be marked by intense emotional reactions to perceived rejection or criticism, alongside persistent difficulties in communicating relationship needs clearly. There may be a pattern of ending relationships when they become too intimate, yet paradoxically a drive to remaining in unfulfilling relationships due to fear of being alone. Sexual intimacy can be particularly challenging, with individuals often experiencing conflict between desire and anxiety. The maintenance of consistent boundaries with partners proves especially difficult, as the fear of both intimacy and abandonment creates confusion about appropriate relationship limits.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work benefits from focusing initially on emotional regulation within relationships and understanding the push-pull pattern that characterises their romantic encounters. Primary emphasis could be placed on building awareness of the conflicting needs for intimacy and safety, while developing capacity to tolerate both emotional closeness and healthy distance. Work often centres on managing intense relationship anxiety without acting on avoidant urges, while helping clients understand how past experiences influence their current relationship patterns.

Essential therapeutic goals include building skills for maintaining connection during relationship stress, developing secure boundaries while maintaining intimate connection, and learning to communicate relationship needs effectively. A significant portion of the work involves supporting clients as they work through their fear of intimacy while building tolerance for vulnerability in romantic relationships.",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection and relationship maintenance can follow distinctive patterns, with individuals having a tendency to be attracted to partners who confirm their negative relationship expectations. There may be challenges in selecting and maintaining relationships with partners who offer consistent emotional availability, with a tendency to choose partners who are themselves avoidant or inconsistently available. When partners offer genuine intimacy, there can be a tendency to become overwhelmed and engage in relationship-sabotaging behaviours. They may find themselves attracted to 'rescuer' type partners, only to reject them when genuine support is offered. Their relationship pattern can involve emotional withdrawal when partners demonstrate strong commitment, and they struggle significantly with accepting genuine care and affection. The alternating pattern of idealisation and devaluation in romantic relationships can lead to difficulty in recognising relationship red flags, potentially maintaining cycles of unstable or unsafe relationships.",

'name' => "Fearful-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style"

'High_Average' =>

'summary' => "This pattern shows predominantly avoidant attachment features with typical levels of anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting someone who maintains significant emotional distance in their romantic relationships. This pattern type indicates someone who primarily manages relationship challenges through distancing strategies.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships can show a pattern of emotional distancing with ordinary levels of relationship concern. The respondent may maintain significant emotional boundaries and may struggle with sustained emotional intimacy despite having normal desire for connection, potentially withdrawing when relationships become too close. Communication patterns may be restrained, with careful monitoring of emotional expression.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work often focuses on addressing the prominent avoidant tendencies while acknowledging and normalising typical relationship anxieties. Key areas include understanding how strong distancing patterns interact with normal relationship concerns. Work typically involves gradually expanding capacity for emotional connection while recognising that their relationship anxiety levels are similar to most people. The typical level of anxiety can provide a helpful foundation for engaging in therapeutic work, offering a pathway to exploring relationship patterns while respecting existing coping mechanisms.",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection often reflects a preference for individuals who respect emotional boundaries while providing typical levels of reassurance. These individuals typically seek partners who can tolerate their need for significant distance without requiring intense emotional engagement, yet who maintain normal levels of availability. They may be drawn to partners who maintain similar levels of emotional distance, creating relationships that feel safe but potentially lack depth. When partnered with more emotionally expressive individuals, they often struggle to balance their partner's needs for connection with their own strong preference for distance.",

'name' => "Dismissive-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style"

'High_Low' =>

'summary' => "This pattern indicates a strongly dismissive-avoidant attachment style in romantic relationships, characterised by high emotional distancing with minimal relationship anxiety. These individuals maintain significant emotional independence and self-reliance in romantic relationships, showing little apparent concern about relationship

stability or partner approval. Their approach to relationships typically prioritises autonomy and emotional distance, with minimal investment in partner reactions or relationship dynamics.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships are characterised by a strong preference for emotional distance and independence, with minimal anxiety about relationship outcomes. These individuals typically maintain clear boundaries and emotional separation from partners, often prioritising personal space and independence over relationship development. They tend to view emotional needs or requests for greater intimacy from partners as unnecessary or burdensome, maintaining a stance of self-sufficiency in relationships. Their communication style is often pragmatic and emotionally detached, with limited sharing of personal feelings or vulnerabilities. They may engage in relationships that maintain comfortable distance, showing little distress about potential relationship loss or partner dissatisfaction.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work benefits from focusing on gradual awareness-building of relationship patterns and their impact, while respecting the client's strong need for autonomy. Initial emphasis often needs to be placed on establishing the relevance of relationship work to the client's personal goals, as they may see little reason for change. Development of awareness about the potential benefits of emotional connection, while respecting their need for independence, forms a crucial part of the work. The therapeutic process typically involves careful exploration of the costs and benefits of their current relationship style, with particular attention to maintaining their sense of autonomy throughout the process. These clients may benefit from building awareness and understanding of how past experiences influence their current relationship patterns",

‘'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection typically favours individuals who maintain significant emotional distance or mirror their own self-reliance. These individuals often seek relationships that require minimal emotional engagement while providing practical benefits or companionship. They may be drawn to partners who are similarly independent or who accept significant emotional distance in relationships. When partnered with individuals seeking greater emotional closeness, they typically maintain their distance through various strategies, including focus on work or other external activities. Long-term relationships are usually maintained through established patterns of limited emotional engagement and clear maintenance of separate lives.",

'name' => "Dismissive-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style"

'Average_High' =>

'summary' => "This pattern demonstrates high anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting someone who experiences significant relationship concerns while maintaining normal levels of emotional distance. This combination can result in complex relationship dynamics with intense worry about relationship stability.",

'interpersonal' => "Within romantic relationships, the respondent may display high attachment anxiety, marked by significant worry about relationship stability. Their relationships are frequently characterised by anxious monitoring of partner availability. Communication might reflect a duality, with expressions of strong relationship concerns alongside some reluctance for deep emotional engagement.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work could focus on managing significant relationship anxiety. Primary emphasis could be placed on building the capacity for emotional regulation in relationships, developing more secure strategies for managing intense relationships. Attention to building internal security while maintaining healthy relationship engagement forms a crucial part of the therapeutic process.",

'partner_patterns' => "People with this pattern may select partners who provide significant reassurance. They may be drawn to partners who mirror their own common ambivalence about intimacy, though their high anxiety often creates pressure for greater closeness. When partnered with consistently available individuals, they may struggle to maintain steady engagement due to their significant anxiety about dependency.",

'name' => "Anxious-Preoccupied Romantic Attachment Style"

'Average_Average' =>

'summary' => "This pattern indicates typical flexibility in romantic attachment style, with neither strong avoidance nor high anxiety predominating. These individuals demonstrate usual levels of both independence and connection in relationships, showing common responses to relationship challenges. Their scores suggest normal population levels of both anxiety and avoidance in relationships.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships typically demonstrate common patterns of engagement, with usual capacity for both emotional connection and independence. These individuals maintain relationships with typical levels of anxiety or avoidance, showing normal flexibility in their responses to relationship challenges. They generally demonstrate the ability to communicate relationship needs and concerns while maintaining common boundaries. Their positioning on both dimensions suggests capacity for stable relationships, though they may experience typical challenges with either closeness or distance.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work could focus on addressing specific relationship challenges while acknowledging generally typical attachment patterns. Emphasis is usually placed on working with particular situations that create relationship stress, while recognising that overall attachment patterns fall within normal ranges. The work may involve identifying specific triggers that activate anxious or avoidant tendencies, while building on existing relationship capabilities.",

'partner_patterns' => "People with this attachment pattern are likely to choose partners similar to themselves. They generally demonstrate typical capacity for relationships with various attachment styles, though they may struggle with partners showing extreme patterns. Their relationship maintenance strategies usually involve common compromise between needs for connection and autonomy.",

'name' => "Secure Romantic Attachment Style"

'Average_Low' =>

'summary' => "This pattern shows normal avoidant tendencies with minimal anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting someone who maintains normal levels of emotional distance without significant relationship worry. This combination often indicates a stable attachment style with common preferences for independence, while maintaining capacity for relationship engagement when desired.",

'interpersonal' => "People with this attachment pattern may have a healthy desire for maintenance of personal space and a high level of trust in their partner’s availability. Communication patterns usually reflect calm assertion of common independence needs without marked anxiety about partner responses.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work could focus on addressing specific relationship challenges while building on the stability provided by low anxiety. Emphasis could be placed on exploring particular situations where more intimacy could benefit relationship satisfaction.",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection typically reflects preference for individuals who respect normal personal space while maintaining stable relationship engagement. These individuals often choose partners who can tolerate typical emotional distance without requiring intense closeness. They may be drawn to partners who mirror their own comfort with independence, creating relationships that maintain usual space. When partnered with individuals seeking greater closeness, they typically maintain normal boundaries without significant anxiety about relationship impact.",

'name' => "Secure Romantic Attachment Style"

'Low_High' =>

'summary' => "This pattern indicates minimal avoidance combined with high anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting a predominantly anxious-preoccupied attachment style. Respondents with this pattern may seek close emotional connection while experiencing significant worry about relationship stability and partner availability. Their low avoidance allows for pursuit of intimacy, though often complicated by intense relationship anxiety. This pattern may be experienced by partners as ‘clinginess’.”,

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships typically demonstrate intense engagement with significant anxiety about partnership stability. People with this pattern type may seek emotional closeness while experiencing strong worry about potential relationship threats or partner availability. Their relationship may be characterised by active pursuit of intimacy combined with heightened sensitivity to perceived rejection or abandonment. Communication patterns usually reflect strong desire for connection alongside frequent seeking of reassurance about relationship status.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work might focus on developing adaptive emotion regulation and self-soothing capabilities while understanding a partner's need for independence. Primary emphasis could be placed on building internal security and managing relationship anxiety. Attention to building self-trust and reducing dependency on constant reassurance forms may be an important part of the therapeutic process.",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection may reflect strong desire for connection combined with intense concern about relationship security. Adaptive partner selection would involve seeking a partner who can provide consistent reassurance and emotional availability, though they may paradoxically be drawn to less available partners who confirm their relationship anxiety. They may engage quickly and deeply in relationships, sometimes overwhelming partners with needs for closeness and reassurance. When partnered with more emotionally distant individuals, they may increase their pursuit of connection, often creating challenging relationship dynamics. Their relationships are usually characterised by intense emotional engagement and significant energy spent monitoring and maintaining partner connection.",

'name' => "Anxious-Preoccupied Romantic Attachment Style"

'Low_Average' =>

'summary' => "This pattern shows minimal avoidance with normal anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting someone who is comfortable with closeness while experiencing common relationship concerns. This combination often indicates good potential for intimate relationships with normal levels of anxiety about relationship stability. Their low avoidance facilitates relationship engagement, while normal anxiety creates relatively adaptive relationship monitoring patterns.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships typically demonstrate openness to emotional connection with usual vigilance about relationship stability. People with this pattern type maintain comfortable levels of intimacy, often characterised by ready engagement in emotional intimacy. Communication patterns usually reflect ease with emotional expression.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work could focus on addressing specific anxiety triggers while building on existing comfort with connection. Emphasis could be placed on developing strategies for managing common relationship concerns while maintaining healthy engagement.",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection typically reflects comfort with intimacy while maintaining usual concern about relationship security. These individuals often seek partners who can provide consistent emotional engagement while offering normal reassurance about relationship stability. They usually demonstrate capacity for sustained intimate relationships, though they may periodically seek typical confirmation of partner commitment. When partnered with more emotionally distant individuals, they typically maintain their desire for connection while experiencing common anxiety about the relationship gap.",

'name' => "Secure Romantic Attachment Style"

'Low_Low' =>

'summary' => "This pattern demonstrates low levels of both avoidance and anxiety in romantic relationships, typically indicating a secure attachment style. People with this pattern generally show comfort with both emotional intimacy and autonomy, maintaining relationships without excessive worry about either closeness or distance. Their balanced approach suggests capacity for healthy relationship engagement with minimal defensive strategies. Approximately 10% of the population scores in this way, indicating exceptionally secure attachment.",

'interpersonal' => "Romantic relationships may demonstrate healthy security and flexibility in emotional engagement. They may maintain comfort with both intimate connection and appropriate independence, demonstrating the ability to navigate relationship challenges without significant anxiety or avoidance. Their relationships are usually characterised by clear communication, appropriate trust, and balanced emotional engagement.",

'therapeutic' => "Therapeutic work might focus on maintaining and enhancing existing relationship strengths while addressing specific challenges that arise. Emphasis is typically placed on building upon secure attachment patterns while developing even greater relationship awareness. The work may involve identifying particular situations that are emotionally challenging, while strengthening existing capabilities for healthy relationship engagement. Given the exceptionally secure attachment, therapeutic work may involve increasing empathy or understanding of a partner that may not have the same level of secure attachment",

'partner_patterns' => "Partner selection typically reflects a healthy balance between needs for connection and autonomy. These individuals often choose partners with whom they can maintain consistent emotional engagement while respecting individual differences. They usually demonstrate capacity for relationships with various attachment styles, though they tend to maintain their own security. When partnered with individuals showing more challenging attachment patterns, they typically maintain their balanced approach while showing patience with partner growth. Their relationships are usually characterised by consistent emotional availability combined with respect for healthy boundaries.",

'name' => "Secure Romantic Attachment Style"

Developer

Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR)-short form: reliability, validity, and factor structure. Journal of Personality Assessment, 88(2), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041

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Assessment Questions

NovoPsych

Experience in Close Relationship Scale - Short Form (ECR-S)

Instructions:

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. Please respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	I don't worry about being abandoned.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
10	I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	I worry that a romantic partner won't care about me as much as I care about them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Developer Reference:

Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR)-short form: reliability, validity, and factor structure. Journal of Personality Assessment, 88(2), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041

Administer Now

Sample Result

Assessment powered by NovoPsych

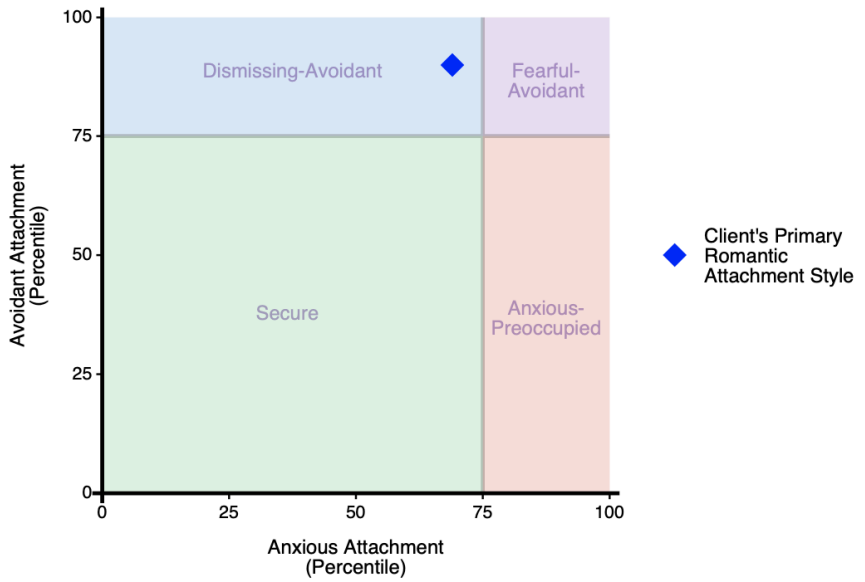
Experience in Close Relationship Scale - Short Form (ECR-S)			
Client Name	Generic Client	*Date administered*	23 Dec 2024
Date of birth (age)	14 Dec 1975 (49)	*Time taken*	19s
Assessor	Dr David Hegarty		

Attachment Style

	Raw Score (6 to 42)	Percentile	Descriptor
Avoidant Attachment	23	90	High
Anxious Attachment	26	69	Average

ECR-S Attachment Style

Anxious Attachment vs Avoidant Attachment



Interpretation

The client's results on the ECR-S indicate a primary attachment pattern of Dismissive-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style. This pattern shows predominantly avoidant attachment features with typical levels of anxiety in romantic relationships, suggesting someone who maintains significant emotional distance in their romantic relationships. This pattern type indicates someone who primarily manages relationship challenges through distancing strategies.

Pattern Information:
Primary Pattern: Dismissive-Avoidant Romantic Attachment Style

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Client Name	Generic Client

Interpretation (cont.)

Pattern Key: This analysis is determined by the client's combination of High Avoidant Attachment and Average Anxious Attachment.

Primary Attachment Pattern Analysis:
Interpersonal Implications:
Romantic relationships can show a pattern of emotional distancing with ordinary levels of relationship concern. The respondent may maintain significant emotional boundaries and may struggle with sustained emotional intimacy despite having normal desire for connection, potentially withdrawing when relationships become too close. Communication patterns may be restrained, with careful monitoring of emotional expression.

Therapeutic Considerations:
Therapeutic work often focuses on addressing the prominent avoidant tendencies while acknowledging and normalising typical relationship anxieties. Key areas include understanding how strong distancing patterns interact with normal relationship concerns. Work typically involves gradually expanding capacity for emotional connection while recognising that their relationship anxiety levels are similar to most people. The typical level of anxiety can provide a helpful foundation for engaging in therapeutic work, offering a pathway to exploring relationship patterns while respecting existing coping mechanisms.

Patterns in Partner Selection:
Partner selection often reflects a preference for individuals who respect emotional boundaries while providing typical levels of reassurance. These individuals typically seek partners who can tolerate their need for significant distance without requiring intense emotional engagement, yet who maintain normal levels of availability. They may be drawn to partners who maintain similar levels of emotional distance, creating relationships that feel safe but potentially lack depth. When partnered with more emotionally expressive individuals, they often struggle to balance their partner's needs for connection with their own strong preference for distance.

The following items contributed to the client's high score on the Avoidant Attachment scale of the ECR-S:
- 1. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need. (Strongly Agree)
- 3. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back. (Strongly Agree)
- 7. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner. (Strongly Agree)

Scoring and Interpretation Information

For comprehensive information on the ECR-S, see here.

Scores for the ECR-S consist of two main attachment dimensions, Attachment Avoidance and Attachment Anxiety. The scoring system reflects distinct patterns of relating in close relationships:

- Attachment Avoidance (items 1,3,5,7,9,11; score range: 6 to 42): High scores indicate strong discomfort with closeness and dependency in relationships, manifesting as emotional distance, excessive self-reliance, and reluctance to share personal feelings or rely on others. Individuals with high avoidance tend to maintain rigid emotional boundaries and may employ defensive strategies to protect against perceived relationship threats.
- Attachment Anxiety (items 2,4,6,8,10,12; score range: 6 to 42): High scores reflect intense fears about relationship stability and partner availability, manifesting as hypervigilance to

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Client Name	Generic Client

Scoring and Interpretation Information (cont.)

relationship cues, excessive need for reassurance, and difficulty maintaining emotional equilibrium when partners are unavailable. Individuals with high anxiety tend to seek excessive closeness and validation from relationship partners.

Each score is converted to a percentile based on normative data, and descriptors (Low, Average, High) are assigned based on percentile ranges:
- Low: 25th percentile or below
- Average: 26th to 74th percentile
- High: 75th percentile or above

Percentiles are computed based on an undergraduate sample, where a percentile of 50 represents typical patterns of responding. The normative sample was undergraduate students.

The interpretative text includes the Primary Attachment Pattern Analysis. This pattern analysis is based upon the specific combination of score descriptors (Low, Average, High) across both dimensions. These patterns range from secure styles (e.g., "Secure Style") to various insecure patterns (e.g., "Fearful-Avoidant Style", "Dismissing Style", "Preoccupied Style"). Each pattern provides specific insights into attachment organisation and relationship dynamics, along with associated therapeutic implications and approaches. The interpretation considers interactions between the avoidant and anxious dimensions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the person's attachment style and its implications for relationships and therapeutic work. The specificity of the overall Attachment Pattern allows for highly tailored therapeutic recommendations and insights into potential treatment challenges and opportunities.

Client Responses

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	7	6	5	4	3	2	**1**
2	I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	1	2	**3**	4	5	6	7
3	I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**
4	I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**
5	I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	7	6	5	4	3	**2**	1
6	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	**1**	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**
8	I don't worry about being abandoned.	**7**	6	5	4	3	2	1

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Client Name	Generic Client

Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	7	6	**5**	4	3	2	1
10	I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7
11	I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.	**1**	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	I worry that a romantic partner won't care about me as much as I care about them.	1	**2**	3	4	5	6	7