

## Five Styles of Managing Anxiety in a Relationship

### Underfunctioners

- Tend to have several areas where they just can't get organized.
- Become less competent under stress, thus inviting others to take over.
- Tend to develop physical or emotional symptoms when stress is high in either the family or the work situation.
- Each such labels as the "patient," the "frail one," the "sick one," the "problem," the "irresponsible one".
- Have difficulty showing their strong, competent side to intimate others.

### Overfunctioners

- Know what's best not only for themselves but for others as well.
- Move in quickly to advise, rescue, and take over when stress hits.
- Have difficulty staying out and allowing others to struggle with their own problems.
- Avoid worrying about their own personal goals and problems by focusing on others.
- Have difficulty sharing their own vulnerable, underfunctioning side, especially with those people who as viewed as having problems.
- May be labeled the person who is "always reliable" or "always together."

### Blamers

- Respond to anxiety with emotional intensity and fighting.
- Have a sort fuse.
- Expend high levels of energy trying to change someone who does not want to change.
- Engage in repetitive cycles of fighting that relieve tension but perpetuate the old pattern
- Hold another person responsible for one's own feelings and actions.
- See others as the sole obstacle to making changes.

### Pursuers

- React to anxiety by seeking greater togetherness in a relationship.
- Place a high value on talking things out and expressing feelings, and believe others should do the same.
- Feel rejected and take it personally when someone close to them wants more time and space alone or away from relationship.
- Tend to pursue harder and then coldly withdraw when an important person seeks distance.
- May negatively label themselves as "too dependent" or "too demanding" in a relationship.
- Tend to criticize their partner as someone who can't handle feelings or tolerate closeness.

### Distancers

- Seek emotional distance or physical space when stress is high.
- Consider themselves to be self-reliant and private persons – more "do it yourselfers" than help-seekers.
- Have difficulty showing their needy, vulnerable, and dependent sides.
- Receive such labels as "emotionally unavailable," "withholding," "unable to deal with feelings," from significant others.
- Manage anxiety in personal relationships by intensifying work-related projects.
- May cut off a relationship entirely when things get intense, rather than hanging in and working it out.
- Open up most freely when they are not pushed or pursued.