

Exercises to Promote Integration for Avoidant Attachment

Following are some basic practices to help you integrate your brain if you've had a history of avoidant attachment. These practices are inspired by Dr. Dan Siegel's book [Brainstorm](#).

Wheel of Awareness

If you've had a history of avoidant attachment, one helpful exercise to promote integration is to practice becoming aware of your internal body states. A good place to begin this practice is Dr. Dan Siegel's Wheel of Awareness (available [here](#)).

Non-Verbal Television Exercise

One fun exercise to promote integration is to practice becoming aware of non-verbal signals by watching television with the sound turned off or in a language you don't understand. When you have a history of avoidant attachment, you tend to rely more on the left-sided language centers of your brain for information. However, when you watch TV without understanding the dialogue, it forces your brain to fire up your right-sided non-verbal signal perception. These non-verbal signals include eye contact, facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, posture, timing, and intensity.

Autobiographical Journaling

Since autobiographical memory is a specialty of the right side of the brain, you can promote integration by practicing autobiographical journaling. Simply begin by writing down what you did today in as much detail as possible. Start with the specifics of how you got out of bed, how your body felt as you brushed your teeth or got dressed, how you ate breakfast. See if you can sense your experiences as you write about them. After you have spent some time writing about your recent memories, try to recall more distant autobiographical instances, still focusing on writing with detail.

Emotional Intelligence Quiz

Visit the Greater Good Science Center and take their [Emotional Intelligence Quiz](#). The quiz asks you to read people's facial expressions and identify the emotion in 20 photos. Take the quiz once and note your score. Then take the quiz a second time; this time try to make the

same facial expressions you see on the screen before identifying each emotion. Notice if there is a significant difference between your two scores.

Notice Any Feelings of Wanting Closeness

When you have a history of avoidant attachment, it is common to prioritize independence over closeness. However, research shows that even if there is an outer focus on independence, there is often an inner sense of needing closeness that is beneath awareness. With this in mind, try to tune in to any inner hints, however small they may be, that you may feel a desire to be closer to people in your life. As you begin to notice these desires, consider taking small steps to reach out to someone in your life to express your feelings of wanting more time or connection with them. It is important to go slowly and take one tiny step at a time. Avoidance was an important adaptation for you, so be patient with yourself as you lean in to pursuing closeness.

