

COUPLES THERAPY

My partner is great but wants all of my time

His neediness is beginning to creep me out – what can we do to get through this?

Each week i asks experts to answer readers' questions about love, sex and relationships

I've been seeing a guy for 10 months: he is attentive, caring and funny. He likes cooking, he listens to me, he's good-looking and the sex is great. We live in different cities, so only see each other every other weekend (when he doesn't have his kids staying with him).

"We have a lot going for us except for one thing – he doesn't do anything else. He spends most of his time calling and texting me. He has no hobbies, he has one friend, and he doesn't go out. His kids are the only other thing in his life.

"He calls me four or five times a day. He wants all my time and gets annoyed if I am not available.

"He admits he is needy and says his attachment style is anxious.

"I am an independent 45-year-old woman. I recently found out that my attachment style is classed as "fearful-avoidant". I don't like when a man demands constant validation – it's draining and unattractive.

"I am confused about whether I am the problem or he is the problem. Is this just a person in love or someone to run away from?"

Intimacy and relationship expert Jan Day says:

You and your boyfriend can have a lot of fun together – but after 10 months, your attachment styles have begun to impact your relationship. People with an anxious attachment style tend to need reassurance and want a lot of contact. People with an avoidant style present as more independent and cooler emotionally. But just because you both have insecure

attachment styles doesn't mean you can't have a secure relationship.

You would need to start by giving him the reassurance he needs before asking for what you need. For example: "I really like you and enjoy our time together. I'm finding it difficult to stay connected when we are apart because the more you call me, the more I tend to pull away emotionally and I don't want to do that. I'd like to find a way of staying connected that feels good to both of us. How would it be if I texted you every lunchtime and we had a phone call once a week at an arranged time? Would you be willing to give it a try?"

You both need to make a decision about what kind of relationship you want. Do you want a "me-centred" relationship where you both prioritise your own needs and wants, or do you want to be in a "we-centred" relationship? A "we-centred" relationship means you both put the relationship first. It is a secure way of relating that comes naturally to people with a secure attachment style.

Making the transition from being single to being in a secure relationship means being willing to adjust and finding out what works for the relationship.

We aren't going to meet someone who has all the same likes, dislikes and foibles as we do. And if we did, we probably wouldn't be attracted to them anyway. So there is a lot of letting go, compromising and finding ways to do things as a team.

Neither one of you is "the problem". Making it work means you both becoming aware of the ways that you cause distress to the other and finding ways to work with that.

As told to Marianne Power

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Send your questions about sex and relationships to features@inews.co.uk

