AAI

Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)

The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) is a semi-structured interview used to assess adults' attachment representations of their childhood attachment experiences. It relies on a series of questions about childhood memories and about the way these experiences influence current relationships. The AAI requires administration by a trained interviewer and a qualitative analysis, coded according to a standardized grid. It is mainly used in research, and sometimes in clinical practice, to assess the attachment patterns transmitted to the next generation.

Number of questions	20 questions
Estimated duration	60 minutes
Language	English
Original name	Adult Attachment Interview
Target audience	Adults
Authors	Mary Main, Ruth Goldwyn (1985)
Category	Emotional dependency

Preview of the 20 questions

Could you start by helping me get oriented to your early family situation, and where you lived and so on?

If you could tell me where you were born, whether you moved around much, what your family did at various times for a living?

I'd like you to try to describe your relationship with your parents as a young child, if you could start from as far back as you can remember?

Now I'd like to ask you to choose five adjectives or words that reflect your relationship with your mother starting from as far back as you can remember in early childhood, as early as you can go, but say, age 5 to 12 is fine.

I know this may take a bit of time, so go ahead and think for a minute... then I'd like to ask you why you chose them. I'll write each one down as you give them to me.

Now I'd like to ask you to choose five adjectives or words that reflect your childhood relationship with your father, again starting from as far back as you can remember in early childhood, as early as you can go, but again say, age 5 to 12 is fine.

I know this may take a bit of time, so go ahead and think again for a minute... then I'd like to ask you why you chose them. I'll write each one down as you give them to me.

Now I wonder if you could tell me, to which parent did you feel the closest, and why?

Why isn't there this feeling with the other parent?

Scoring & interpretation

The AAI uses a specific coding method, carried out by trained experts, in which the participant's narrative responses are transcribed and then scored on dimensions such as coherence, concreteness and the capacity to elaborate on attachment. The resulting profiles classify attachment into main categories: secure/autonomous, dismissing, preoccupied/ambivalent, unresolved/disorganized. The interview is not self-scored: it requires an in-depth analysis according to the Main & Goldwyn system.