

Lean on me (except when it's dysfunctional)

Breaking down the types of dependence in relationships

Know anybody who is a bit of a lone wolf? Perhaps you've got a colleague who acts like a baby? Or maybe you know a friend who seems to be surgically attached at the hip to their partner?

All of these behaviours are reflective of different types of dependency playing out in real life. In functional families we are taught things at age-appropriate levels so that by the time we reach adulthood, we can take care of ourselves. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen, and some ships sail before we jump on them. Let's breakdown the archetypes to better understand how people show up in relationship.

The Baby (dependent) – An adult who is almost or completely dependent on others to get their needs met. Usually, this person was babied by a parent and still carries expectations to be cared for in the same way from a spouse.

The Conjoined Twin (co-dependent) – Two adults who mutually rely on each other (often in a romantic relationship) to an unhealthy and dysfunctional extent where they place their entire worth, meaning and identity in the other's hands. In real life this sounds like "I don't know what I'd do without you".

The Lone Wolf (anti-dependent) – A person who is incredibly self-sufficient but often denies, refuses, or rejects help when offered, especially when it would be to their benefit.

The Handyman (independent) – A person with sufficient skills to take care of themselves but is open and willing to receive help from others and be in connection.

The Soldier (inter-dependent) – A person who shows independence, autonomy and has built healthy relationships and social networks as part of an infrastructure to be well connected and supported.

The baby, conjoined twin and lone wolf archetypes develop out of a childhood where functional and healthy dependence was poorly or inadequately role modeled. The baby often has everything done for them way beyond what



I'm a big boy and this outfit belittles us both, Mummy

is age appropriate, thus they never learn to do things for themselves. The conjoined twin often lacks self-esteem and relies on others to prop themselves up in the world and borrow a bit of identity, so they don't have to address underlying issues of feeling worthless. The wolf often did not have their needs met and learned that they can't rely on others and need to take care of themselves.

These three archetypes have risks and cost. The baby and twin's biggest risk is abandonment, and the wolf's cost is isolation and loneliness. As these three types are less functional, it can be very challenging to be in a relationship to a person and feel equal. This can greatly impact your ability to communicate, parent and be intimate.

The reward of the handyman and soldier is freedom, autonomy, connection. Harmony and happiness are much more likely when operating out of these archetypes. The good news is, through knowledge, self-awareness, and application you can step up and be whoever you want. So, take a moment to reflect on your relationship and ask your partner. Which archetype do you most resonate with and does your partner agree?

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Scout is a Relationship Therapist & Educator working with singles and couples based in Manly. For more info visit www.thelovescout.com or call **0410 030 463** to book in a session.



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