



JENNIFER BALLERINI, PSY.D

Helping People Build Better Relationships

## PURSUERS & DISTANCERS

**The Pursuer** is the person in the relationship who pursues the other. Who often feels left out, below, or less power or value than the other. They want to catch the other person or have the other person pay attention to them because they have unmet needs from their pasts that they are unconsciously trying to get the other person to take care of. Instead of focusing on their own life and stability, they focus on the other person.

This person could be the one who pursued the relationship from the very start ... or, they could have been reluctant (love avoidant or wary at first) then switched over to pursuer energy after the other person withdrew their energy. These people often come from childhoods where they experienced loneliness, neglect or even abuse often from a one-down or powerless position. Or witnessed their same sex parent acting in a pursuing way to their opposite sex withdrawing parent.

**The Distancer** is the other side of the polarity. These people are the ones who avoid intimacy to varying degrees. They keep their partners at arms length often using work, children, hobbies, exercise, etc as exit strategies to keep unavailable. They often came from enmeshed backgrounds where they had a lot of responsibility as a young age or had to care for ineffective parents or siblings. Or, alternatively, from situations where they were overly controlled or hovered over.

To them, closeness is associated with burden or duty. Intimacy makes them uncomfortable but they also desire it as human's need contact (which often drives them to pursue a partner then abandon them when true intimacy begins to sneak in — i.e. The 90 Day Wonders and beyond who disengage after the romantic stage of a relationship wanes).

Both of these types of people have intimacy issues – just in different ways. And its not uncommon for a person uncomfortable with intimacy to have both energies within themselves too — either ping ponging back and forth between the styles when they connect with different people ... or even flip-flipping within the same relationship with the same person. They never learned how to be intimate in a healthy, sustained way (which is unfortunately not an uncommon occurrence in our world).

*Reprinted from <http://www.shift-it-coach.com/2012/02/relationship-are-you-a-distancer-or-pursuer/>*