

FUSION RECOGNITION

Understanding Schemas



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We all have underlying beliefs, rules and tools running in the background called Schemas. They help us to organize, interpret and respond to situations that occur in our daily life. These cognitive frameworks are long standing automatic response patterns that developed during our childhood. Think of them as programs that help make daily activities easier.

They develop naturally as a protective measure to when your childhood needs were perceived by you as not being sufficiently met, thus serving a functional purpose at the time. They form in response to ongoing experiences with caregivers, siblings, peers and community members, as well as your own personal moments. No one is to blame for these developments and they cannot be avoided. Every human being will develop several of the schema types to a greater or lesser degree of sensitivity and once a schema is formed, it's extremely stable

The problem is that, as stated, schemas develop between the ages of 0-12 and are unseen and often unquestioned lenses through which we understand ourselves, our relationships and the world well into our adulthood. While initially useful, these Schemas become less useful over time. They distort the way you see things, influence your assumptions and lead to predictions about whether a situation is true, or will turn out to be true.

While a schema may have served a useful and protective purpose in childhood, they often become outdated, maladaptive, and ineffective in more complex adult situations. Can you imagine what your life would be like now if you didn't change some of your behaviors, beliefs and thoughts you had when you were five? In a way, you haven't. This helps to explain those times when you KNOW something to not be the best course of action, but you FEEL this is the best course of action. Schemas create a feeling that something is wrong with you and/or with your personal connections.

Once a schema is activated, it brings up extremely painful feelings (shame, guilt, loss, fear, sadness, anger, etc.) and they interfere with your ability to feel safe in your decisions, your ability to get your needs met, your relationships, and your ability to meet the needs of others.

Here are the five main characteristics of a Schema:

1. They are experienced as self-evident truths.
2. They are self-perpetuating and resistant to change.
3. They seem to predict the future, particularly within your relationships, because they create the illusion that you can see what's coming and prepare accordingly.
4. They're usually triggered by difficult events that activate old beliefs about yourself.
5. They are always accompanied by high levels of emotion.

We cannot get rid of them either. They are permanent. However, we can change our relationship to them, we can become aware of how and when they show up and if we can do this, we can set them aside and form new automatic and more useful responses. But first we have to know that they are there and we do that by identifying them, objectifying them.

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Types of Schemas



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Here is a list of the most ten commonly held schemas. It is not unusual for everyone to have all ten of them running in the background, but it is more likely that you will experience three or four of them more strongly than the others.

Abandonment/Instability

A sense that the world is an unstable place and that those around you are unreliable and will leave.

Mistrust/Abuse

The expectation that others will intentionally hurt, abuse, cheat, lie, take advantage, or neglect.

Defectiveness/Shame

A hyper-sensitivity to beliefs that one is defective, inferior, bad, unwanted, or unworthy.

Social Isolation/Alienation

A sense of isolation, not belonging to any groups or relationship. Always on the outside looking in.

Dependence/Incompetence

The sense that one cannot handle daily responsibilities without help. Conflict between life goals.

Failure/Approval-seeking

A desire for approval, recognition or attention motivated by the deep belief that one will fail.

Entitlement/Grandiosity

The assumption that others should provide for needs. Expectations of special rights and support.

Self-sacrifice/Subjugation

Compulsion to selflessly meet the needs of or to avoid retaliation from others at one's expense.

Negativity/Pessimism

The overwhelming sense that life is empty and meaningless. Overemphasis on the negative.

Unrelenting standards/Overcontrol

A striving to meet very high personal standards to avoid negative consequences. Procrastination.

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Schemas Sensations



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Each of the previously mentioned schemas all have different sensations, emotions, and thoughts that show up once the schema has been activated. The following are descriptions of the most commonly reported.

Abandonment/Instability

Anxiety, shame, rejection, fear, loneliness, loss, unpredictability, butterflies in stomach.

Mistrust/Abuse

Suspicion, loneliness, humiliation, caution, anger, gullible, tightness in neck and shoulders.

Defectiveness/Shame

Inferiority, unworthy, defective, bad, unwanted, unworthy, hyper-sensitive, heaviness, heat flush.

Social Isolation/Alienation

Alone even with others, cut off, weird, odd, rejected, aloof, uneasy, grey, cloudy, cold, distant.

Dependence/Incompetence

Helpless, cloudy thoughts, anxious, fearful, undecided, sweaty, warm, sick to stomach.

Failure/Approval-seeking

Hopeless, apathetic, resigned, cynical, nervous, jittery, self-deprecating, heavy, nauseous.

Entitlement/Grandiosity

Expectant, surprised, dismayed, deprived, victimized, angry, aggressive, hot flush, heaviness.

Self-sacrifice/Subjugation

Resentment, guilt, selfless, idealistic, discarded, coerced, taken advantage of, angry, heated.

Negativity/Pessimism

Lost, jaded, resentment, apathetic, guilt, disappointment, betrayal, pain, loss, irritation, no energy.

Unrelenting standards/Overcontrol

On edge, wound up, unrelenting thoughts, judgmental, critical, clenched jaw, stomach, body.

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The 10 Most Common Automatic Schema Responses



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Each schema type is typically met with an automatic coping response. These are ways in which we would have learned to deal with the perceived unwanted experience and which were positively reinforced consequence of the action. It is something we would not have noticed or would even be able to notice as a child do to our level of development.

Here are the ten most common automatic responses. It is important to note that these responses should not be taken personally when on the receiving end since that occur naturally. It is also important to note that by learning how to identify these responses in yourself and others, changes can be made and the level of empathy can be increased allowing for a healthier integration of these coping mechanisms.

Attacking: Anxiety, shame, rejection, fear, loneliness, loss, unpredictability, butterflies in stomach.

Demanding: Suspicion, loneliness, humiliation, caution, anger, gullible, tightness in neck and shoulders.

Surrendering: Inferiority, unworthy, defective, bad, unwanted, unworthy, hyper-sensitive, heaviness, heat flush.

Clinging: Alone even with others, cut off, weird, odd, rejected, aloof, uneasy, grey, cloudy, cold, distant.

Withdrawal: Helpless, cloudy thoughts, anxious, fearful, undecided, sweaty, warm, sick to stomach.

Stimulation:

Hopeless, apathetic, resigned, cynical, nervous, jittery, self-deprecating, heavy, nauseous.

Pleasure Seeking:

Expectant, surprised, dismayed, deprived, victimized, angry, aggressive, hot flush, heaviness.

Manipulating:

Resentment, guilt, selfless, idealistic, discarded, coerced, taken advantage of, angry, heated.

Negativity/Pessimism

Lost, jaded, resentment, apathetic, guilt, disappointment, betrayal, pain, loss, irritation, no energy.

Unrelenting standards/Overcontrol

On edge, wound up, unrelenting thoughts, judgmental, critical, clenched jaw, stomach, body.