



# WHAT IS SCHEMA THERAPY?

**S**chema Therapy is highly effective in the treatment of a range of different issues, particularly those of a long-standing nature.

Schema Therapy is a comprehensive therapeutic approach that combines several approaches and is designed to help people change long-standing patterns of thinking and acting.

A schema is a cognitive framework that helps you organise and interpret information. Schemas can be useful because they allow us to take shortcuts in interpreting the vast amount of information that is available in our environment.

However, these mental frameworks also cause us to exclude important information, so instead, we might only focus on things that confirm our pre-existing beliefs and ideas.

Schema therapy works by changing those defeating core themes which you keep repeating throughout your life. These deep-rooted patterns are associated not only with thoughts but also feelings and even physical sensations, e.g. "I'm unlovable," "People don't care about me," "Something bad is going to happen," or "I will never be good enough."

Because they tend to begin early in life, they are schema which become comfortable and familiar, but they are not healthy.

## **W**hat is Schema Therapy used to treat?

Schema Therapy has demonstrated effectiveness within randomized controlled trials as a treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder as well as Cluster C & Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

Preliminary evidence also supports the use of Schema Therapy with chronic depression, chronic and complex anxiety disorders; eating disorders, ruminative disorders, substance misuse, alcohol dependence and forensic populations.

## **I**s Schema Therapy right for me?

You may find Schema therapy helpful if any of the following apply to you:

- ⇒ You find yourself over-reacting to certain situations (which may lead to impulsive behaviours that you later regret)
- ⇒ You are drawn to the same type of partner over and over, even your emotional needs are not met in these relationships
- ⇒ You feel stuck in habitual patterns or addictive behaviours that you can't seem to change
- ⇒ You struggle to say no, or with the thought of others disliking you
- ⇒ You have low self-esteem or confidence, which holds you back from fulfilling your potential

Many clients who come for schema therapy have spent years in other types of therapies, such as psychoanalysis or traditional CBT, and were frustrated with the lack of progress.

Schema therapy is a very collaborative and empowering process that truly aims to help you turn insights into real changes.

Schema therapy has also recently been blended with mindfulness meditation and elements of neuroscience for clients who can further benefit from them.



# WHAT IS SCHEMA THERAPY?

## Why might Schema Therapy be the wrong therapy for me?

You may want to consider the following in deciding if Schema Therapy is right for you:

⇒ If your problems are not of a long-standing nature, CBT may be better for you. Schema Therapy works well with more ingrained problems which may have been around a very long time.

Schema Therapy works at a more intensive level and emphasises the building of positive patterns of thinking and behaviour.

It can take time to understand how these problems have evolved, so Schema Therapy is best for people whose problems may be more deep-seated.

⇒ Schema Therapy is not appropriate for people with severe drug or alcohol misuse problems.

⇒ Schema Therapy is not appropriate for people who are currently experiencing psychotic episodes.

⇒ You will need to be prepared to undertake a variety of experiential techniques. These may include therapeutic exercises that use imagery and role-plays.

Your therapist may also ask you to write letters to caregivers (that you will not be expected to send).

## What should I expect from Schema Therapy?

1. Firstly, you will work with us to identify some of your enduring and self-defeating patterns that typically begin early in life.
2. Questionnaires may be used as well to get a clear picture of the various patterns involved.
3. Next, we will work together to use a combination of talking and experiential exercises to raise your emotional awareness.

During this phase, you may get in touch with some of the early experiences and learn how to spot them when they are being triggered in your daily life.

4. Your focus will turn to behavioural change.

Structured assignments may be given so you can continue to work outside of sessions.

You can actively practise these to replace some of the negative, habitual schemas with a fresh perspective.