

Unmet emotional needs



We are born with a set of needs to grow up healthily. The physical needs and consequences of not getting them are obvious but there are emotional ones too. Schema therapy defined the emotional needs and the consequences of them not being met in the development of maladaptive schemas that play out in mental health challenges. Considering your unmet emotional needs from childhood can help understand your mental health and begin schema therapy.

Love and secure attachment

Healthy attachment to caregivers makes us feel safe, loved, secure and lovable. Insecure attachment will leave us with maladaptive schemas around these.

Safety and protection

We all require this to develop without roadblocks. Physically or emotionally unsafe environments cause schemas that drive anxiety, mistrust, anger and more

Being valued as a unique, competent, independent person

Being valued for who you are with condition, accepted as someone with your own thoughts, feelings and identity even if they differ from the caregiver. Being considered competent to make your own choices. Not getting these can lead to maladaptive schemas around worthiness, isolation, avoidance, incompetence or people pleasing.

Learning through spontaneity and play

A lot of practical and social learning comes through interaction and play. If you were criticised for this or restricted it may cause negative schemas and issues with being very serious or hypercritical. You may worry about judgment so be socially anxious

Healthy boundaries and limits

On the other side, too much freedom and no limits creates maladaptive schemas too. Failing to learn appropriate conduct, boundaries or realistic limits can cause schemas around entitlement, impulsivity or not understanding others' needs. This causes social problems and frustration when the adult world naturally has limits. If this need wasn't met we simply reflect on it without self-judgment, knowing we can develop beyond the schemas.

Schema therapy begins by understanding these were not met and that your maladaptive schemas and modes makes sense. Awareness allows change. Reflect on which are relevant to you and move onto the maladaptive schema sheet then schema modes to devise your plan for your personal development.