

# Schemas and EMDR Cognitions

In gaining an understanding of targets for EMDR processing, and the relevant negative and positive cognitions, we can utilise our knowledge of various cognitions associated with schemas. This resource which has been adapted from the work of Pilkington to include the positive schemas, and additional schemas identified more recently is intended as a guide to assist clinicians. Use your own clinical judgement when determining the best cognitions for your clients.

The following pages provide an overview of the 20 different maladaptive schemas identified by Yalcin et al., (2022) and their definitions. Maladaptive schemas represent unhealthy core beliefs about the self, others, and the individual's environment, that have developed as a result of negative life experiences and unmet emotional needs (Young et al., 2003).

The positive schemas identified by Louis et al., (2018) are also outlined. Positive schemas consist of memories, cognitions, beliefs, bodily sensations, and neurobiological reactions regarding oneself and one's relationship with others.

The last section includes an overview of each schema and the corresponding negative schema, and the relevant negative and positive cognitions. As the recent Young Schema Questionnaire revealed 20 schemas rather than the previously identified 18, I have theoretically included what the corresponding positive schema would be for these schemas, although these have not been explored or assessed in the research on Positive Schemas by Louis et al. To gain a copy of the Positive Schema Questionnaire, you need to contact John Louis directly as this is copyrighted.



# Negative and Positive Schemas

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA	POSITIVE SCHEMA
Emotional Deprivation	Emotional Fulfilment
Abandonment	Stable Attachment
Mistrust	Trusting*
Social Isolation	Social Belonging
Defectiveness	Healthy Self Worth*
Failure	Success
Dependence	Healthy Self Reliance/Competence
Vulnerability to Harm	Basic Healthy and Safety/Optimism
Enmeshment	Healthy Boundaries/Developed Self
Subjugation	Healthy Assertiveness*
Self Sacrifice	Healthy Self Interest/Self Care
Fear of Losing Control	Emotional Stability and Control*
Emotional Constriction	Emotional Openness and Spontaneity
Unrelenting Standards	Realistic Expectations
Entitlement	Empathic Consideration
Insufficient Self Control	Healthy Self Control/Self Discipline
Approval Seeking	Self-Directedness
Negativity	Healthy Optimism
Punitiveness (Self)	Self Compassion
Punitiveness (Other)	Compassion for Others

Adapted from Lockwood - Asterisk denotes my reversal of negative schema in absence of identified correlating positive schema in the research

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# Negative Schemas Definitions

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA	DEFINITION
Emotional Deprivation	The expectation that others will not adequately meet one's needs for nurturance and support
Abandonment	The expectation that one will eventually be abandoned by significant others
Mistrust	The expectation that one will be abused, humiliated, or manipulated by others
Social Isolation	The belief that one is different from others and does not belong within a community
Defectiveness	The belief that one is fundamentally flawed, unworthy, or unlovable
Failure	The expectation that one will inevitably fail, or is fundamentally inadequate compared to others
Dependence	The belief that that one is completely hopeless, dependent on others, and is incapable of making everyday decisions on their own
Vulnerability to Harm	The belief that the world is dangerous, and that disaster can strike at any moment
Enmeshment	Excessive emotional involvement with others due to the belief that one cannot cope without the other
Subjugation	Excessive submission of one's needs to avoid punishment, abandonment, and rejection.
Self Sacrifice	Excessive sense of duty to meet the needs of others to the sacrifice of one's own needs
Fear of Losing Control	A belief that dire consequences will result from failing to maintain control of emotions
Emotional Constriction	Excessive over control of emotions due to feelings of shame and embarrassment of all emotions
Unrelenting Standards	The belief that one will be harshly criticised if they do not meet very high (often internalised) standards of performance or behaviour often at the expense of gratification
Entitlement	The belief that one is superior to others and is entitled to special privileges and rights
Insufficient Self Control	Difficulties exercising self-control to achieve goals, low frustration tolerance, and inability to control urges and impulses
Approval Seeking	Excessive focus on gaining the attention, recognition, and approval of others often at the expense one's own sense of self
Negativity	An increased focus on the negative aspects of life, whilst minimising the positive
Punitiveness (Self)	The belief that oneself should be punished for any mistakes or imperfections; hypercriticalness towards one's self
Punitiveness (Other)	The belief that others should be punished for any mistakes or imperfections; hypercriticalness towards others

# Positive Schema Definitions

POSITIVE SCHEMA	DEFINITION
Emotional Fulfilment	The belief that you have someone in your life who meets your emotional needs of attachment, connection and safety.
Stable Attachment	The belief that your relationships are stable and enduring.
Trusting*	The belief that you can have a healthy level of reasonable trust in others
Social Belonging	The belief that you belong and are accepted within groups.
Healthy Self Worth*	The belief that you are worthy and valid as a person.
Success	The belief of being capable and competent in how you define success.
Healthy Self Reliance/Competence	The belief that you are capable of managing tasks based on your capacity.
Basic Health and Safety/Optimism	The belief of having health and safety relevant to your true environment.
Healthy Boundaries/Developed Self	Belief in your ability to set and maintain appropriate limits in relationships and self-identity.
Healthy Assertiveness*	The confidence to express one's needs and rights respectfully and clearly.
Healthy Self Interest/Self Care	Belief in the importance of prioritizing one's own well-being and needs.
Emotional Stability and Control*	The capacity to manage and regulate emotions effectively.
Emotional Openness and Spontaneity	The willingness to express and experience emotions freely and naturally.
Realistic Expectations	The ability to set achievable and practical goals and standards.
Empathic Consideration	The practice of understanding and being considerate of others' feelings and perspectives.
Healthy Self Control/Self Discipline	The ability to regulate impulses and maintain focus on long-term goals.
Self-Directedness	The ability to take initiative and make decisions independently based on capacity.
Healthy Optimism	The tendency to have a positive and hopeful outlook on life.
Self Compassion	The practice of being kind and understanding towards oneself.
Compassion for Others	The ability to show kindness and empathy towards others.

Adapted from Lockwood - Asterisk denotes my reversal of negative schema in absence of identified correlating positive schema in the research

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# Schemas and EMDR Cognitions

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA AND NEGATIVE COGNITIONS	CORRESPONDING POSITIVE SCHEMA AND POSITIVE COGNITION
<b>Emotional Deprivation</b>  I am insignificant I am unimportant I am invisible I don't matter I deserve to be ignored I am uncared for	<b>Emotional Fulfilment</b>  I am significant I am important I can receive care I can have love I can care for myself now
<b>Abandonment</b>  I am destined to be alone I cannot rely on others to continue to provide support I cannot trust that others will stick by me	<b>Stable Attachment</b>  I am capable of long relationships I can have stable relationships I can rely on myself I can rely on others
<b>Mistrust</b>  I can't trust anyone I cannot let my guard down I am in danger	<b>Trusting*</b>  I can trust others and myself I can be safe with others I'm safe now I can choose whom to trust I can protect myself
<b>Social Isolation</b>  I am different I don't belong I am a loner I don't fit in anywhere	<b>Social Belonging</b>  I am okay as I am I can fit in with others I can connect with others I belong and am accepted. I fit in with my community
<b>Defectiveness</b>  I am terrible I am worthless I am shameful I am fundamentally flawed I don't deserve love I am a bad person I am not good enough I deserve only bad things I am permanently damaged I am ugly (my body is hateful) I am a disappointment I deserve to die I deserve to be miserable I am not lovable	<b>Healthy Self Worth*</b>  I am valuable and worthy I accept myself as I am I am good enough I am fine as I am I am worthy I am worthwhile I am honourable I am a good person I am a loving person I am deserving (fine/okay) I deserve good things I am fine (attractive) I am okay just the way I am I deserve to live I deserve to be happy I am loveable



# Negative and Positive Schemas

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA	POSITIVE SCHEMA
<p><b>Failure</b></p> <p>I am a failure (will fail) I am incapable I am inadequate I am stupid (not smart enough) I cannot succeed</p>	<p><b>Success</b></p> <p>I can succeed I am strong I am capable I am intelligent (able to learn) I can learn</p>
<p><b>Dependence</b></p> <p>I can't handle things on my own I need others to take care of me I am helpless without support I cannot get what I want I cannot trust my judgment I cannot handle daily life I cannot be trusted</p>	<p><b>Healthy Self Reliance/Competence</b></p> <p>I am competent and self-reliant I can manage on my own I am capable of independence I can get what I want I can trust my judgment I am a competent person I can handle things</p>
<p><b>Vulnerability to Harm</b></p> <p>I cannot protect myself I am vulnerable I am powerless I am going to die</p>	<p><b>Basic Healthy and Safety/Optimism</b></p> <p>I am safe and secure I can handle life's challenges I trust in my safety and well-being I can (learn to) take care of myself I'm safe now I can heal I can survive I am (can be) healthy</p>
<p><b>Enmeshment</b></p> <p>I can't separate my needs from others I lose myself in relationships I must always be what others want me to be I cannot survive without other/s I am nothing/no one</p>	<p><b>Healthy Boundaries/Developed Self</b></p> <p>I have healthy boundaries and a strong sense of self I can be myself in relationships My needs and feelings are valid I have choices I can have a life of my own</p>
<p><b>Subjugation</b></p> <p>My needs don't matter I must always comply with others I shouldn't speak up for myself I am powerless I am not in control I cannot stand up for myself</p>	<p><b>Healthy Assertiveness*</b></p> <p>My needs are important and I can assert them I can express my opinions and feelings I have the right to set boundaries I now have choices I can speak up I can stand up for myself I am now in control I can make my needs known</p>



# Negative and Positive Schemas

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA	POSITIVE SCHEMA
<b>Self Sacrifice</b>  I must always put others before myself My needs are less important It's selfish to take care of myself I have to please everyone I'm responsible (for others' needs/feelings)	<b>Healthy Self Interest/Self Care</b>  It's okay to take care of myself My needs are important I can honour my needs I can say no
<b>Fear of Losing Control</b>  I must always be in control I can't trust my emotions I fear losing control of my feelings It's not safe to express or feel my emotions	<b>Emotional Stability and Control*</b>  I can manage my emotions effectively I trust myself to handle my feelings I can remain calm and in control I can regulate and manage my feelings
<b>Emotional Constriction</b>  I must hide my true feelings It's unsafe to express emotions I shouldn't show vulnerability	<b>Emotional Openness and Spontaneity</b>  I can express my emotions openly with whom I choose It's safe to share my feelings with whom I choose I am allowed to show vulnerability
<b>Unrelenting Standards</b>  I must be perfect I can never make mistakes I am never good enough I should know better I have to do better	<b>Realistic Expectations</b>  I can set realistic and achievable goals It's okay to make mistakes I am good enough as I am I do the best I can I can rest
<b>Entitlement</b>  I am superior I am more deserving than others I deserve special treatment I deserve more than others."	<b>Empathic Consideration</b>  I can consider others I am equal to others It is okay to care for others and be vulnerable
<b>Insufficient Self Control</b>  I cannot stand discomfort I cannot control my behaviour I can't stick to my resolutions I can't complete tasks I have no control over my actions I am impulsive and undisciplined I can't stick to my goals	<b>Healthy Self Control/Self Discipline</b>  I can tolerate short-term discomfort for my long term goals I can focus on things that are important to me I can persevere I can regulate my behaviors effectively I have the discipline to achieve my goals I am in control of my actions



# Negative and Positive Schemas

MALADAPTIVE SCHEMA	POSITIVE SCHEMA
<b>Approval Seeking</b> I need others' approval to feel worthy I must please others to be accepted I am not good enough without validation I am only worthwhile (have value) if others say so/think so I am only worthwhile if I am getting attention	<b>Self-Directedness</b> I am confident in my own decisions I don't need approval to feel worthy I value my own judgment I can validate myself I can learn to love myself I can value my accomplishments I am acceptable, even if people don't approve
<b>Negativity</b> I will lose everything I can't be too careful because things will go wrong I will always suffer	<b>Healthy Optimism</b> I can look forward to the future I can have hope I can flourish
<b>Punitiveness (Self)</b> I deserve to be punished I am too hard on myself I can't forgive my mistakes I did something wrong I did something bad I deserve punishment	<b>Self Compassion</b> I am kind and compassionate towards myself I forgive myself for my mistakes I treat myself with care and understanding I did the best I could I learned (can learn) from it I can forgive myself I can have compassion for myself
<b>Punitiveness (Other)</b> I can't forgive others' mistakes I am better than others	<b>Compassion for Others</b> I can show kindness and empathy towards others I can understand and forgive others' mistakes

The corresponding negative and positive schemas and associated cognitions can be a guide and reference when trying to map out, or elicit beliefs for EMDR reprocessing. Keep in mind that it is important to be guided by your client and that their beliefs may not fall neatly into these categories or specific wording. For certain schemas such as approval seeking, unrelenting standards, subjugation, fear of losing control, and emotional constriction these are often regarded conditional or secondary schemas as they may be largely driven from the presence of another schema such as defectiveness, failure, abandonment, emotional deprivation etc. In these cases be curious with clients if you can drill and dig down to what the target is really about through socratic questioning techniques and ensuring the target is one which is focused on the worst part of the event if appropriate.

Regarding the positive schemas, you can use your knowledge of what negative schemas are dominant for clients relating to their goals, and do positive resourcing on these positive schemas. For example, applying EMDR based strategies such as Andrew Leeds Resource Development and Installation (RDI) protocol to build up certain positive schemas and corresponding adaptive information to assist in your EMDR preparation work.

