

GITTA JACOB, HANNIE VAN GENDEREN AND LAURA SEEBAUER

Breaking NEGATIVE THINKING Patterns



**A SCHEMA THERAPY SELF-HELP
AND SUPPORT BOOK**



WILEY Blackwell

CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Title page](#)

[Copyright page](#)

[Preface](#)

[Credit for Images](#)

[1 Introduction](#)

[1.1 What Is Schema Therapy?](#)

[1.2 Understanding the Origin of Your Patterns](#)

[Part I: Become Familiar with Your Modes](#)

[2 Child Modes](#)

[2.1 Vulnerable Child Modes](#)

[2.2 Angry and Impulsive Child Modes](#)

[2.3 Happy Child Mode](#)

[2.4 Summary](#)

[3 Dysfunctional Parent Modes](#)

[3.1 Demanding Parent Modes](#)

[3.2 Guilt-Inducing Parent Modes](#)

[3.3 Punitive Parent Mode](#)

[3.4 Summary](#)

[4 Coping Modes](#)

[4.1 Compliant Surrender Mode](#)

[4.2 Avoidant Coping Mode](#)

[4.3 Overcompensatory Coping Mode](#)

[4.4 Summary](#)

[5 Healthy Adult Mode](#)

[5.1 How can I detect a Healthy Adult Mode in myself?](#)

[5.2 How can I detect a Healthy Adult Mode in others?](#)

[5.3 How can I distinguish the Healthy Adult Mode from other modes?](#)

[5.4 Summary](#)

[Part II: Change Your Modes](#)

[6 Healing Vulnerable Child Modes](#)

[6.1 Get Acquainted with your Vulnerable Child Mode](#)

[6.2 Taking care of your Vulnerable Child Mode](#)

[7 Gaining Control over Angry and Impulsive Child Modes](#)

[7.1 Get Acquainted with your Angry or Impulsive Child Mode](#)

[7.2 Setting Limits to Angry or Impulsive Child Modes](#)

[8 Strengthen the Happy Child Mode](#)

[8.1 Get Acquainted with your Happy Child Mode](#)

[8.2 Exercises to Strengthen the Happy Child Mode](#)

[9 Setting Limits to Dysfunctional Parent Modes](#)

[9.1 Get in Touch with your Dysfunctional Parent Mode](#)

[9.2 Silence Dysfunctional Parent Modes](#)

[10 Changing Coping Modes](#)

[10.1 Get in Touch with your Coping Modes](#)

[10.2 Reducing Coping Modes](#)

[11 Promoting Your Healthy Adult Mode](#)

[Glossary](#)

[References and Further Reading](#)

[Index](#)

[Access to Companion Site](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

List of Tables

Chapter 02

[Table 2.1 Naming Child Modes](#)

Chapter 05

[Table 5.1 An overview of Functional and Dysfunctional Modes](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 02

[Figure 2.1 Child Modes](#)

Chapter 03

[Figure 3.1 Demanding Parent Mode](#)

[Figure 3.2 Guilt-inducing Parent Mode](#)

[Figure 3.3 Punitive Parent Mode](#)

Chapter 04

[Figure 4.1 Surrendering](#)

[Figure 4.2 Avoidance](#)

[Figure 4.3 Overcompensation](#)

Chapter 06

[Figure 6.1 Healthy Adult - Happy Child](#)

Chapter 07

[Figure 7.1 Angry Child Mode](#)

Chapter 08

[Figure 8.1 Happy Child Mode](#)

Chapter 09

[Figure 9.1 Overcoming Parent Modes](#)

Chapter 10

[Figure 10.1 Reducing avoidance](#)

[Figure 10.2 Reducing overcompensation](#)

Breaking Negative Thinking Patterns

***A Schema Therapy Self-Help and
Support Book***

Gitta Jacob, Hannie van Genderen and Laura Seebauer

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2015
© 2011 Beltz Psychologie in der Verlagsgruppe
Beltz • Weinheim Basel

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex,
PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Gitta Jacob, Hannie van Genderen and Laura Seebauer to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services and neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data applied for.

Hardback ISBN: 9781118877722

Paperback ISBN: 9781118877715

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover image: Daniel Vi  n  , *Visages Multiples*; courtesy of foxx galerie, Zurich, www.foxxgalerie.com. Background    RapidEye / iStockphoto

Preface

Are you familiar with the experience of negative thinking patterns keeping you from attaining your personal goals? With this book we want to help you understand yourself, your feelings, and your personal patterns better. Your negative thinking patterns are the “beaten track” which you have walked many times. If you want to find new ways, you should understand the origins of your beaten track and why you take it again and again. The first part of this book is all about understanding negative thinking patterns, and the related emotions and behaviors. In the second part we will explain in detail how you can change these patterns, if you consider a change necessary or reasonable.

We base our explanations on the so-called Schema Mode approach. This is the latest development in Schema Therapy, which was developed by Jeffery Young and colleagues in New York (2006) and is rapidly spreading around the globe. Many therapists are enthusiastic about schema therapy, as it integrates experiences and techniques from various therapeutic approaches very effectively. Not only thoughts but also feelings are taken into consideration, and current problems are of interest as well as their origin in childhood. This usually gives clients the impression of work being done on the “core” of their problems in an easy and understandable way. In work with schema modes, clients and therapists are at eye-level. Both parties are looking for better ways to meet clients’ needs.

In this book we try to go through the Schema Mode approach in an understandable way for anyone who is interested. We want to encourage you to change your patterns in such a way that negative feelings will weaken and positive feelings get more space in your life. To attain

this goal, you will need to reduce disadvantageous coping strategies for negative feelings. You can use this book either as a self-help book or as assistance to a (Schema-) therapy. Psychological technical terms which may not be familiar to you are printed in **bold** and explained in the Glossary. You can download and print all worksheets from the book's website (www.wiley.com/go/Jacob/breakingnegativethoughtpatterns). More detailed instructions are provided at the end of the book.

This book project is part of a long-standing cooperation and exchange program of the University of Freiburg (Germany), the Regionale Instelling voor Ambulante Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg (RIAGG) in Maastricht and the University of Maastricht (Netherlands). This cooperation, which offered us many interesting insights and common projects, has been a pleasure throughout its duration. We thank Darren Reed and his colleagues from Wiley Blackwell for their effective and committed support. Claudia Styrsky drew the wonderful cartoons in this book - we could not get enough of them! Last but not least we say thanks to our husbands and families for being so tolerant (again) to help us devote so many week-ends and so much precious free time to this project!

*Hamburg, Maastricht und Freiburg, Autumn 2014
Gitta Jacob, Hannie van Genderen, Laura Seebauer*

Credit for Images

Illustrations are by Claudia Styrsky, München.

1

Introduction

Case Example “Exclusion”

Carol is a 34-year-old mother of a 4-year-old son, in a stable relationship. She works part-time as a bank assistant. She could be quite satisfied with her life, but minor incidents sometimes trigger severe feelings of exclusion or rejection. This may happen, for example, when her colleagues who work full-time make an “insider joke” she doesn’t get. Most often, she reacts by drawing back from them. But she may also respond like a stroppy child to her colleagues, in particular when she is having a bad day anyway. Then she is not only annoyed by her colleagues, but also feels ashamed of her own reaction.

Carol has had this kind of problem all her life... maybe it has something to do with her childhood. Because of her father’s frequent job changes, she was forced to move and start all over again several times. Facing a new school class, she often made the experience of feeling excluded. At the age of 12, she even experienced severe mobbing in school.

Does that sound familiar to you? Persistent patterns you just cannot get rid of? The same kind of feelings mixing up your life over and over again?

If you want to change your patterns, you should first understand and recognize which patterns are bothering you right now in your daily life. Find out how these

patterns developed over your life and why they are so persistent. In the first part of this book we explain how you can explore the origins of your patterns. You will also discover your real **needs** and how you can meet them better.

In [Part II](#) we will introduce methods to change your patterns step by step and in the way that you want. You can either deal with this by yourself, using the advice in this book, or, if and when this seems too difficult, you might consider seeking help from a therapist.

The therapy that's aiming to change your patterns is called schema therapy. The central concept in schema therapy is called "schema mode" or simply "Mode." A Mode is a persistent pattern of behaving and feeling that always causes the same type of problems. In fact, it is a state of mind that is connected to bad experiences in your youth or childhood.

In this book we will explain the schema Modes we know about and the ways that you can change them. You can use this book both as a self-help guide and as a support during a schema therapy. If you decide to change your Modes by yourself we recommend that you get someone you trust to discuss your patterns with you. We also recommend that you read this book step by step. Think about each chapter you read before going ahead. In this way you will learn to deal better with difficult situations, your negative feelings will diminish and you will fulfill your needs in a healthier way.

1.1 What Is Schema Therapy?

Schema therapy is one of the latest advances in psychotherapy. It is a development of cognitive behavior therapy, combining ideas from various psychotherapeutic

approaches. [Box 1.1](#) lists psychotherapy approaches that have been influential on schema therapy.

Box 1.1: Approaches That Have Influenced Schema Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy: Focusing on changes in thoughts and behavior in concrete, current life problems.

Depth psychology: Most psychological problems have their origin in experiences in childhood and youth.

Psychodrama and Gestalt therapy: Techniques to change problematic **emotions**.

Humanistic therapy/ Client-centered therapy: Focusing on human needs and on their importance for mental health.

Emotions play the most important role in schema therapy. Both positive and negative childhood experiences form our adult emotional reactions. Imagine that you have been humiliated as a child, because your clothes were different or your nose was extraordinarily big. If you often felt rejected and humiliated as a child, it's very likely that you will easily feel rejected or humiliated as an adult, too - even if nobody means to make you suffer this way. Such feelings typically lead to many problems: for instance, you might not make contact with others easily and thus not be able to establish healthy and close relationships; or you might react aggressively to prevent further humiliation, even if your action is not at all appropriate.

Therefore, the very first step of schema therapy is always to understand your negative feelings and their origin in

your biography. Then, all current negative consequences of these feelings and childhood experiences are explored. The second step is to support you in changing your feelings and your dysfunctional behaviors. Thus, you will more satisfied and better able to fulfill your needs in a healthy and appropriate way.

1.2 Understanding the Origin of Your Patterns

A basic principle of the Mode concept is that everyone experience themselves differently at different moments. While you may feel very healthy and relaxed in one moment, you may feel vulnerable and sad in another. In some other situation you may rather be emotionally cold and feel nothing. Such different states are called “Modes.” In schema therapy we define the following Modes:

- **Vulnerable and Angry Child Modes.** Most people are familiar with feelings of weakness, inferiority, sadness or intense rage, defiance or anger, in which they do not feel grown up. In schema therapy such states are called “Child Modes.” We call them Child Modes because we assume that when important needs are not met in someone’s childhood, they will have emotional parts that cannot grow up.
- **Dysfunctional Parent Modes.** People with intense Child Modes often tend to devalue themselves or to put excessive pressure upon themselves. These Modes are called Dysfunctional Parent Modes, as they have often been “modeled” by devaluing or abusive parents, or **bullying** class mates or siblings. The term *parent* in Parent Modes does not only relate to real parents, but also to any other important maladaptive attachment figure.

- **Coping Modes.** When someone is affected by negative feelings they tend to use one or more favored strategies to reduce those feelings or to hide them from others. The technical term for such psychological “survival strategies” is “Coping Mode.” Such **coping** includes avoidant behaviors like social retreat or cannabis use in order to calm down negative feelings. Another way of coping with negative feelings is to behave aggressively or excessively self-confidently when actually feeling weak or inferior.
- **Healthy Adult Mode.** Of course we do not only have dysfunctional or immature modes: we also have healthy parts with high-level functioning, healthy connections with other people, and positive emotions. The part that is able to organize your life, solve problems and take care of good relationships is called the “Healthy Adult Mode.”
- **Happy Child Mode.** All people – both children and adults – have a need for fun, happiness and easiness. The Happy Child Mode is related to these feelings.

1.2.1 Recognizing your Modes

The first part of this book is all about becoming familiar with your Modes. It will describe and explain all the Modes. It includes many examples illustrating how to detect Modes in yourself and in others. We will find out how strong the different Modes are in *your* life. How did they develop in your life and why are some Modes more significant than others? We will focus on how your Modes make you feel and what type of situations cause them to pop up.

1.2.2 Changing your Modes

In the second part of the book you will learn strategies and exercises which can help you to change your Modes. The

general aim is to enable you to cope with difficult situations in the way that suits you. You'll get to know your own needs better and learn how to fulfill them. These exercises and changes are related to three different levels of human experience:

- **Thoughts (Cognitive level).** On the cognitive level it's most relevant to learn everything about your Modes and to reflect on the appropriateness of the cognitions related to your Modes. On this level you also work out realistic plans about what you want to change. Protocols and worksheets will guide and help you with this.
- **Feelings (Emotional level).** You will find many suggestions on how to change distressing emotions. Imagery exercises are powerful emotional techniques. In these exercises you imagine yourself in a certain situation, and think about what you need and what you want to change. Next, you imagine that you behave in a certain way to change the situation. The influence of this exercise on emotions is much stronger than merely thinking about the same issue.
- **Behaviors (Behavioral level).** Behavior changes usually follow work with cognitions and emotions. The book will offer many examples and suggestions on how to change persistent behavior patterns in your life.

Of course, every person is unique, and your Modes differ from other people's. You will take different things out of this book than someone else will. Maybe you just want to get some information about schema therapy. Or maybe you want to try to find out how the Mode perspective applies to you. Maybe you suffer from an emotional problem, or you've been thinking about changing the way you behave in certain situations. You'll find several worksheets in the book which should help you in working out your Modes.

But please be aware that this book is not a replacement for the psychotherapy you may need if you suffer from a serious mental illness!

We hope that this book will help you find out more about yourself and your Modes. Have fun on your “inner journey”!

Part I

Become Familiar with Your Modes

2 Child Modes

Everyone feels or acts like a child sometimes. However, most of us manage to control our childlike behavior in situations in which it would be inappropriate. Child Modes are a way of perceiving the world and other people that resembles the perception of children. Children have difficulty appreciating or adopting other people's perspective when experiencing strong emotions. An adult in a Child Mode has very similar feelings. Further, when you are in a Child Mode your reactions towards others can resemble the behavior of a child. Like a child, you may find it hard to control your impulses: you may start crying in a conversation with your boss, or you may slam the door in a fight with your partner.

Child Modes are active when we experience strong emotions that are not sufficiently explained by the current situation. When we are in a Child Mode feelings of sadness, anger, shame, or loneliness are exaggerated; it can be very difficult to calm down.

Child Modes are typically triggered when we feel rejected, left alone, or put under pressure. In such situations, the fulfillment of basic human needs like closeness, safety, or autonomy seems to be threatened ([Box 2.1](#)), even though this may objectively not be the case. Maybe your friend cancelled a date for the movies you had been looking forward to. If you react with a Child Mode, you may feel very disappointed, unloved, abandoned, or angry. From a more adult perspective you may be able to understand your friend's reasons for cancelling the date and you know that

she usually cares a lot about you. Nevertheless, you are overwhelmed with strong feelings, start to cry, or retreat to your bed.

Box 2.1: Basic Emotional Needs

Basic emotional needs are important for all human beings. However, they can differ in their intensity. In schema therapy we assume five categories of basic emotional needs (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2006)

1. Attachment and safety: You need to feel close to others. The need for attachment comprises safety, stability, attention, love, and acceptance by others.
2. Independence, competence, and identity: You need to have an idea of what makes you the person you are and what you are good at.
3. Freedom to express your important needs and feelings.
4. Spontaneity, fun, and playing.
5. Realistic boundaries: It is especially important for children to know their limits and to accept reasonable boundaries set by others.

People with psychological problems often find it difficult to get these emotional needs met.

People suffering from emotional problems usually experience Child Modes particularly intensely. Small triggers can evoke strong negative feelings, even if the incident is trivial from a more objective perspective. Think of a colleague who did not compliment your new haircut.

Most likely your colleague just did not notice or did not care because he was busy. If you have a strong Vulnerable Child Mode, you may feel alone and unloved. In this chapter we will explain why Child Modes show up so easily in some people.

Three types of Child Mode. The schema therapy model proposes three different types of Child Mode. The *Vulnerable Child Mode* is associated with depressed or anxious feelings such as shame, loneliness, anxiety, sadness, or threat. The second type is the so-called *Angry or Impulsive Child Mode*. In this Mode one usually feels rage, anger, impulsivity, or defiance. Impulsive behaviors appear when someone acts out of the moment without considering the possible negative consequences of his or her action. As an example, a man who was criticized by his boss feels angry and hurt: an impulsive reaction would be risky driving on the way home. The third type of child Mode is the *Happy Child Mode*. We regard this as a healthy Mode: one feels curious and playful, and takes easygoing pleasure in games and activities.

If one or more of these Modes sound familiar to you, it might be helpful for you to come up with your own name for it, such as “small Lisa” for the Vulnerable Child Mode or “pigheaded Tom” for the Angry Child Mode. That will help you to make contact with your child Mode when it comes up.

Everybody experiences feelings of sadness and rage from time to time. How can you decide if a child Mode is active and not just “normal” feelings?

Obviously, everyone knows the feelings related to child Modes very well. The significant difference between “normal feelings” and Child Modes is that child Modes are activated by very small incidents. The intensity of negative emotions seems disproportionate to the event. Moreover, it is really hard for a person in a child Mode to control those feelings and the related reactions.



Figure 2.1 Child Modes