Eighteen common life patterns

A reference list. Most people recognise a few.

Mark any that ring true. This is not a test or a diagnosis. We will talk through what you notice.

Disconnection and rejection

Abandonment
People I love will leave me or will not be there when I need them.

Mistrust
People will hurt, use or take advantage of me.

Emotional deprivation
Nobody will ever really understand me or meet my needs for care.

Defectiveness and shame
There is something wrong with me. If people saw the real me, they would reject me.

Social isolation
I am different. I do not belong.

Impaired independence

Dependence
I cannot cope with everyday life without a lot of help.

Vulnerability to harm
Disaster could strike at any moment and I could not prevent it.

Enmeshment
I am so caught up with someone close that I have no life or identity of my own.

Failure
I am not as capable as other people and I am bound to fail.

Impaired limits

Entitlement
Ordinary rules should not apply to me. I should get what I want.

Insufficient self-control
I cannot make myself tolerate frustration or finish what is boring.

Focus on others

Subjugation
I have to give in to what others want, or there will be trouble.

Self-sacrifice
Other people's needs must come before mine.

Approval seeking
My worth depends on what other people think of me.

Over-vigilance and inhibition

Negativity
Things will go wrong. I focus on the downside.

Emotional inhibition
I must keep my feelings in. Showing them is dangerous or shameful.

Unrelenting standards
I must meet very high standards, or I will be criticised.

Punitiveness
People, including me, deserve to be punished harshly for mistakes.

The eighteen schemas were identified by Jeffrey Young and colleagues.

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This handout supports your therapy. It does not replace professional advice.

Pattern diary

A record of one time a life pattern was triggered, and how you responded.

Name _____ Date _____

What happened? (The trigger)

What I felt, in my emotions and body

What went through my mind

What I did, or wanted to do

Which life pattern was this? Which part of me took over?

What does this remind me of from earlier in my life?

What fits the present situation

What belongs to the past

Where is my reaction bigger than today's event?

What my healthy adult would say about it

What my healthy adult would do

What I did in the end, and how it turned out

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