

Behary works with people with narcissist personalities and those who are in contact with them. By reading her book I gathered that the basic goal of her approach is to help people release maladaptive coping modes, get in touch with deeper feelings and memories, heal and modify early schemas, and eventually, reclaim aspects of themselves and learn how to deal with people high on the spectrum of narcissism and get their needs met in healthy ways. She discusses how narcissism (like most traits and characteristics) appears along a spectrum, from healthy narcissism, which involves assertiveness and self-respect. to covert and overt narcissism all the way to perilous narcissism; the origins of narcissism; the masks narcissists tend to wear and their salient maladaptive schemas, as well as, their deficits in empathy, which she distinguishes from compassion. Empathy is not simply feeling sorrow for another's pain, but the capacity to tune into it, allowing it to resonate within one's own body and mind, whereas compassion includes our taking action to support or alleviate another's pain. It is this impaired capacity that allows people who do not empathize with others' experience to resort to treating them as objects rather than human beings.

Briefly, 'Schema therapy is an integrative model, which draws on cognitive, behavioural, psychodynamic, attachment and gestalt approaches. Practically that means that cognitive and behavioural techniques are widely used, but emphasis is also placed on emotion focused work and experiential techniques. It further places emphasis on the childhood origins of experiences and issues and the development of schemata.....

Schemas often occur outside our awareness and influence our perception of events and help us assign meaning to our experiences. Furthermore, schemas exist on a continuum of activation, from a dormant to a hypervalent condition. As Beck suggests hypervalent schemas can lead to cognitive distortions (1967, cited in Needleman, 1999). Similarly, Young suggests that schemas are dimensional, meaning that they have different levels of severity and pervasiveness and he claims that the more entrenched they are the greater number of situations that activate them and the more intense the negative emotions related to the schemas (Beckley).

More specifically, Young has identified **18 early maladaptive schemas (EMS)**, which are associated with high levels of affect when activated and are unconditional assumptions about the self and others (Young, 1990; 1999, cited in Barlow, 2008). These EMS are usually self-defeating core beliefs and life patterns or themes that are strengthened and elaborated throughout life and are the result of the child's innate temperament and early experiences. It is suggested that children learn to construct reality through early experiences and interaction with their early environment when their needs for love, nurturing, safety, predictability, acceptance, attention, praise, empathy, limits, validation of their feelings and protection, are not adequately met (Young and Klosko, 1994).....

In adulthood we engage in different **coping styles**, often developed in childhood, that decrease distress but unfortunately lead to maintenance, avoidance of or adaptation to one's unprocessed schemas. The coping styles may take the form of schema surrender, avoidance or overcompensation, which means that children may learn to

adapt to their dysfunctional schemas and to their painful childhood experiences, by finding ways to avoid or block out pain, by fighting back or by overcompensating.....

Furthermore, **schema modes** are moment-to-moment emotional states and coping strategies that everyone experiences and which are usually activated by situations we are sensitive to. It is often our schema modes or coping modes that lead us to react in maladaptive or extreme ways to events that remind us of the past' (Tonya Alexandri, 2010).

Wendy Behary writes that we all have schemas, and typically more than one, which are also referred to as our "**buttons**" or "**life traps**" and are filed in many categorical memory folders in our brain. She writes that when 'schemas are activated the effects are similar to the triggering of traumatic memories. The emotional and physical circuits of the brain and body (subcortical regions) often disconnect from the executive, or decision-making, areas of the brain (cortical regions), which are responsible for distinguishing between events in the here and now versus those in the "there and then"..... When a schema is triggered, it can produce a sense of threat due to the extremely powerful negative emotions, thoughts, physical sensations, and self-defeating reactions that arise out of early maladaptive experiences. Present-day circumstances that mirror the memories embedded in the schema will send a resonant message to the brain and body. The brain responds to the perceived threat by attempting to fight the schema, flee the schema, or surrender to the schema.'

There are various activities in the book of how one can explore their own schemata. For instance, if one's **schemas** are abandonment, self-sacrifice, and subjugation, then the **effects of these schemas** might be to remain silent rather than to speak out and **our coping modes** could be giving in or avoiding and **the truth** of the situation might be that it isn't our fault, but we are capable of being responsible for our side of the road.....A **healthy assertive message** could be 'I will not put up to being treated this way'. **The leverage** might be the motive or pressure put upon us by circumstances to actually work on change

Schemas are woven into our sensory system (muscles, nervous system, and viscera) and can initiate intense sensations when they are triggered. So, developing **the skill of mindful awareness**, which means paying attention, or being attuned to our inner experience and external and internal sensations is important in being able to dismantle these old structures and to heal. Mindful awareness fosters interoception and the capacity to discern between truth and fiction and between that which is old and the present, which ultimately fosters freedom.

