

Brief Early Schema Questionnaire (BESQ)

Instructions:

Listed below are definitions of the proposed schema domains and corresponding Early Maladaptive Schemas.

Please read each definition and decide how well it describes you. When you are not sure, base your answer on what you emotionally feel, NOT on what you think to be true.

		Completely unrelated to me	Mostly unrelated to me	Slightly more related to me than not	Moderately relates to me	Mostly relates to me	Relates to me perfectly
1	Abandonment/Instability: The expectation that significant others will not be available to provide support, connection, strength, or protection. "People always leave me!". For people with this schema, close supportive bonds were often established in childhood, but were experienced as either unstable, broken, or not consistently unavailable. "It's just a matter of time and I will be alone again."	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Mistrust/Abuse: The expectation that others will hurt, abuse, humiliate, lie, cheat, steal or manipulate. "I can't trust people" - "people act nice to you because they want something from you."	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	Emotional Deprivation (A to C): The expectation that one will not receive adequate emotional support or be understood by others. A. Deprivation of Nurturance: The absence of attention, affection, warmth, and companionship. "No-one really cares."	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	B. Deprivation of Empathy: The absence of understanding and attunement. "No-one really gets me, or is interested in knowing me."	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	C. Deprivation of Protection and Guidance: The absence of direction, strength, and guidance. "When things are tough, I'm on my own."	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Defectiveness/Shame: Belief that one is defective, unlovable, bad, unwanted, inferior, inadequate and/or shameful. "There's something wrong with me, I'm fundamentally unacceptable, unlovable, have nothing to offer, and flawed."	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	Social Isolation/Alienation: Belief that one is socially isolated, different from others, and does not belong to any group or community. "I am always on the outside of groups looking in, and not fitting in."	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Dependence/Incompetence: Belief that one is helpless and unable to cope with everyday responsibilities without significant help from others, leading to lack of autonomy and self-reliance. "I can't do everyday things; make everyday decisions, without significant help."	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Vulnerability to Harm or Illness. Expectation that a catastrophe is imminent, and one will be unable to prevent it. "The world is dangerous and I am too vulnerable to take a risk."	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Enmeshment/Underdeveloped Self (A and B): Tendency to be overly emotionally involved with one or more significant others, resulting in impaired social development, inner direction, and individuation. A. Enmeshment - "I don't know how to be okay when my (parent/partner/child) is not okay, especially when I cause them to worry."	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	B. Underdeveloped Self - "I often feel that I don't know who I am".	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	Failure: Belief that one has failed or will fail in areas of achievement (school, sports, work, performance) as compared with their peers. "I am a failure, others always seem to be able to achieve more than I	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	Entitlement/Grandiosity: Belief that one is superior to others, should receive special treatment and should not be required to follow the same rules as others. "I am special and deserve special treatment accordingly the rules do not apply to me."	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline (A and B): Inability to appropriately restrain impulses and emotions; difficulty tolerating frustration and boredom to accomplish goals. A. Insufficient Self-Control - "I can't control my behaviors and become excessive at times."	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	B. Self-Discipline - "I cannot tolerate frustration and tend to give up easily."	1	2	3	4	5	6

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16	Subjugation: Surrender of control to others and suppression of one's own emotions and needs to avoid anger, retaliation, or abandonment. "It's just easier for me if I keep my mouth shut, keep my opinions, ideas, wishes, and feelings to myself; agree with others, and keep all my frustrations contained."	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Self-Sacrifice: Hypersensitivity to emotional pain and suffering in others, and a tendency to take on responsibility for their needs and feelings at one's own expense. "I must sacrifice for others at all costs otherwise I would be a selfish person. I cannot tolerate the guilt I feel when putting myself first."	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	Approval-Seeking/Recognition-Seeking: Excessive emphasis on gaining approval, recognition, or attention from others, resulting in an underdeveloped authentic sense of self. Often involves overemphasis on status, achievement, and money. "I need other people's approval or recognition to feel ok; my worth and value depend on it."	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	Negativity/Pessimism: Exaggerated expectation that things will go wrong, or of making mistakes leading to excessive worry. Focusing on the negative aspects of life and minimizing positives. "It's safer for me to expect the worst possible outcome in any situation...You never know."	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	Emotional Inhibition (A and B): Inhibiting spontaneous actions, feelings (especially anger), or communication to prevent being disapproved of, ridiculed, or losing control. "My emotions should always be suppressed or avoided". A. Emotional Constriction - "Displaying my emotions is shameful, embarrassing, or shows weakness or bad character."	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	B. Fear of Losing Control - "Displaying emotions could be dangerous, I could even become volatile"	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Unrelenting Standards/Hypercriticalness: Belief that whatever one does is not good enough, that one must strive to meet very high standards of performance, usually to prevent criticism; and/or excessive emphasis on status, power at expense of health and happiness. "I need to always try to be 100% in everything; second best is not good enough."	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	Punitiveness (A and B): Belief that people (self and others) should be severely punished for making mistakes or not meeting one's internalized expectations or standards. "People should always be punished for their mistakes or misgivings." A. I should be punished for my mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	B. Other people should be punished for thier mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Developer Reference:

Brockman, R., Hayes, C., & Behary, W. (2023). Brief Early Schema Questionnaire (BESQ).

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