



Brief Early Schema Questionnaire (BESQ)

Instructions:

Listed below are definitions of each Early Maladaptive Schema.

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 relatable to me than not | Moderately relates to me | Mostly relates to me | Relates to me perfectly |
|----|---|----------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | I expect that significant others will not be available to provide me with support, connection, strength, or protection. "People always leave me!". For me, the close supportive bonds established in childhood were either unstable, broken, or not consistently available. "It's just a matter of time and I will be alone again." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | I expect that others will hurt, abuse, humiliate, lie to, cheat, steal from or manipulate me. "I can't trust people." And "People act nice to me because they want something from | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 3 | I expect that I will not receive adequate emotional support or be understood by others. (A to C) (A) I feel an absence of attention, affection, warmth, and companionship. "No-one really cares." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 4 | (B) I feel an absence of understanding and awareness of my needs. "No-one really gets me, or is interested in knowing me." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 5 | (C) I feel an absence of direction, strength, and guidance. "When things are tough, I'm on my own." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 6 | I believe that I am defective, unlovable, bad, unwanted, inferior, inadequate, and shameful. "There's something wrong with me, I'm fundamentally unacceptable, unlovable, flawed, and have nothing to | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | I believe that I am socially isolated, different from others, and do 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 | I believe that I am helpless and unable to cope with everyday responsibilities without significant help from others, resulting in a lack of autonomy and self-reliance. "I can't do everyday things and make everyday decisions, without significant help." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 9 | I expect that a catastrophe is imminent, and I 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 | I tend to be overly emotionally involved with one or more significant others, resulting in impaired social development, inner direction, and individuation. (A and B) (A) "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) "I often feel that I don't know who I am". | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 12 | I believe that I have failed or will fail in areas of achievement (school, sports, work, performance) as compared with my peers. "I am a failure, others always seem to be able to achieve more than I can." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 13 | I believe that I am superior to others, I should receive special treatment, and I should not be required to follow the same rules as others. "I am special and deserve special treatment—the rules do not apply to me." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 14 | (A and B) I cannot appropriately restrain my impulses and emotions. I also have difficulty tolerating frustration and boredom when trying to accomplish goals. (A) "I can't control my behaviors and become excessive at times." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 15 | (B) "I cannot tolerate frustration and tend to give up easily." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |



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|----|--|----------------------------|------------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 16 | I surrender to the control of others and suppress my 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 | I feel hyper-sensitive to the emotional pain and suffering of others, and have a tendency to take on responsibility for their needs and feelings at my 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 | Gaining approval, recognition, or attention from others is highly important to me, and this has resulted in an underdeveloped authentic sense of self. I put a large emphasis 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 | I expect that things will go wrong, and I worry constantly about making mistakes. I tend to focus on the negative aspects of life and minimize the 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 | I suppress any spontaneous actions, feelings (especially anger), or speech to prevent losing control, being disapproved of, or ridiculed. "My emotions should always be suppressed or avoided". (A and B) <small>(A) "Displaying my emotions is shameful, embarrassing, and is a sign of weakness and bad character."</small> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 21 | <small>(B)</small> "Displaying my emotions could be dangerous, I could even become volatile." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 22 | I believe that whatever I do is not good enough, I must strive to meet very high standards of performance, to prevent criticism. I put an excessive emphasis on status and power at the expense of my 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 | I believe that people (self and others) should be severely punished for making mistakes or not meeting one's internalized expectations or standards. (A and B) <small>A. "I should always be punished for my mistakes or misgivings."</small> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24 | <small>(B)</small> "Other people should always be punished for their mistakes or misgivings." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Developer Reference:

Brockman, R., Hayes, C., & Behary, W. (2023). Brief Early Schema Questionnaire (BESQ). <https://www.schematherapytrainingonline.com/>

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