# Core emotional needs

PROGRESS PSYCHOTHERAPY

Schema therapy defined 5 emotional needs to develop in am emotionally healthy way. The consequences of them not being met as the development of maladaptive schemas that play out in life. These 5 relate to the categories of maladaptive schemas. Considering what needs were met and unmet from youth can help understand your schemas and engage with schema therapy.

| Core emotional needs | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Secure attachments**<br><br>Secure attachment to caregivers and other key loved ones in youth makes us feel safe, loved, secure and lovable. There should have been little doubt that core safety and connections would be there.<br><br>Unmet needs for secure attachment may play out as the disconnection and rejection schemas today. | **Competence, autonomy and identity**<br><br>This is regarding yourself and being regarded as a capable, competent and unique person by key figures. You should be trusted with age appropriate tasks and criticism would be constructive and fair. You will be valued for who you are and not who others want you to be.<br><br>These needs being unmet will play out in later life as the impaired autonomy and performance schemas. | **Realistic limits and self-control**<br><br>You had fair and reasonable boundaries and limitations.These were not punitive but helped you consider consequences and others.<br><br>These needs being unmet may generate maladaptive schemas around impaired limits like grandiosity or low self-control. | **Freedom to express yourself**<br><br>You were permitted to express your thoughts and feelings. These were responded to in a nurturing and appropriate way. They were not seen as unacceptable, invalid or a nuisance.<br><br>These needs being unmet may generate maladaptive schemas around other directedness. | **Spontaneity and play**<br><br>You were given space to explore and play in the world in an age appropriate way. Your responsibilities weren't too much for your developmental stage and there wasn't excessive pressure to succeed, meet goals or overly high standards.<br><br>These needs being unmet may generate maladaptive schemas around over-vigilance and inhibition in later life. |

© 2025 Robert Fulton (trading as Progress Psychotherapy®) Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.