

Southern Adventist University
School of Social Work and Family Studies

Core Beliefs and Schemas

By

Mike Hoback

Advanced Social Work Practice 1 (SOCW 615)

Dr. Rene' Drumm

October 12, 2011

Early Maladaptive Schemas

I grew up in a normal household with both my mother and father. My father was a career military individual and at the early age of 9 I was sent off to a military academy where I would spend the rest of my school years until graduation. I would return home for summers in the early years but then as I got older I found myself wanting to leave and face individuals that I barely knew back home. In the academy we lived, ate, and slept with the same individuals we went to classes with and became more of a family unit than any other I had known prior. However even living far away and having a secondary family could not replace my real family and as time went on I realized I need to return home and spend time with them. In my junior year I returned home for summer break in May of 1991 and had planned to stay the entire summer with my family. In late June of the same year my father passed away. After his funeral I returned to school two months prior than scheduled as I felt this was my comfort environment. I believe that my upbringing along with the incidents involved helped create my early maladaptive schemas which I believe include *emotional deprivation, social isolation, and abandonment/instability*.

Situation-Thought- Response Patterns

Throughout my life I have had what some call a hard time with commitment, as I believe that if you care about someone they will eventually leave you or fail to care for you back in the same manner. Due to leaving my family at an early age and then my father's passing once I did decide to return home has caused me to place a barrier between myself and any potential successful relationships that may have occurred. In using the *identifying unrealistic expectations* approach I agree that I may be prone to making my negative future become a reality. I could ask myself what is the worst thing that could happen to me if I did open up and decide to get

involved again. Would it kill me if it didn't work? What if it did work? And what do I really believe would happen if I did attempt it.

Example Dialog

Client: I'm just not sure I'll ever be able to trust anyone again.

Therapist: So if you did start trusting someone and it didn't work what's the worst thing that could happen?

Client: I guess I would just leave, not sure?

Therapist: And what's the best thing that could happen?

Client: I guess it would make me more secure about things and not always build a wall between me and everyone else.

Another method of changing my schemas would be *discussing the advantages and disadvantages of old and new schemas*. In using this method I would be able to look at potential rewards I may be passing up on by not allowing myself to have any close relationships. I would also be able to discuss negative ways in which my original schema has caused more problems than solutions.

Example Dialog

Therapist: So can you tell me an advantage of not having an emotional attachment with anyone?

Client: I guess it makes me less likely to experience sadness again.

Therapist: And has that worked for you?

Client: Most of the time I guess. But then I'm depressed because I'm always alone.

Therapist: So what would be an advantage of forming new relationships?

Client: I wouldn't always be alone I guess. I'd have someone with me when I needed it.

In trying to change my thought pattern when situations do arise I believe that *recognizing continua* would be very helpful. In this type of method of modification I would not have to change my schema but look at how my behavior of the schema could be changed. I tend to mistrust people and try and push them away more so as a test to see if they would stay and I could look at trying to change my actions that arise when in these situations.

Example Dialog

Client: I just don't trust anyone.

Therapist: And what do you do when you don't trust someone?

Client: I tend to be mean to them or push them away.

Therapist: And what does being mean to someone look like to you?

Client: I criticize them or just plain ignore them altogether.

Therapist: So do you think it helps you when you treat everyone like this?

Client: No.

Of all the modifying methods available I believe *confronting the past* would work best for me. In using this method I could look back at the situations that caused my schema to take root. I have often believed that because my parents sent me away to a military academy they didn't want me around and that I failed my family when I was not around all those years and then my father passed away. I felt that I had forced him to miss all the things fathers and sons do together because I had decided to remain at school during the summer months and then once deciding to return he passed away. Looking at it now I know my parents wanted the best for me and sent me to a school that would provide me the best possible future to succeed in the military world. I know my father was proud of what I had accomplished while away at school and of the man I became prior to his death. My mother would tell me many years later how he would brag

about awards I received and show pictures to everyone that would have the time. As most fathers and sons would work on cars together, mine was more interested in showing and telling people about the type of soldier I would one day become. Things that I had previously thought were reexamined and I started seeing the actions of my past in a positive light.

Example Dialog

Therapist: So why do you find it hard to become emotionally attached to anyone?

Client: I guess how I grew up. You were taught that you didn't need anyone.

Therapist: And what makes you think that?

Client: Well my parent's sent me off to school without anyone to talk to and in school they always taught us to not trust anyone but your fellow cadets.

Therapist: Have you talked with your mother about why you were sent off to attend school?

Client: Yea we talked about it in some length just recently. She said my dad believed that this would provide me the best foundation for a military career.

Therapist: And do you believe that?

Client: I do now after talking with her. That's all my family knew was the military life.

Therapist: So your father actually was actually thinking about your future and not abandoning you?

Client: Yea I guess it looks that way now but not then.

The method of modifying my schemas that I would like to incorporate at the present time would be *imagining the new self*. I am now a single father of a 9 year old daughter who means everything to me and it is because of her I have often told myself that I want to become a better person. **I remember after our first day in class last year we had to write about ourselves and then**

someone had to respond on the post. One guy in my class posted that he was in the program because of his family. He was a grandfather and wanted to be able to move out west to be around his grandchildren and that his family life meant more to him than anything he had ever accomplished in life. I remember looking at the post and thinking to myself that that's the type of man I want to become. I believe I have a pretty good idea of the new self I want to become and know the effects this will have pretty well. I know the areas of my life I want to change and the problems that they have caused me. I have had problems talking with people I don't know, I'm standoffish, rude and mean. I have a hard time trusting people and building any type of relationship with anyone not just emotional ones. I truly believe I have accomplished a lot in my life with respect to my careers prior to attending Southern but I want to be able to look back and see something more, something I will be remembered for. Like the post mentioned, I want to be able to look back and be proud of what I care about most such as friendships and family because in the end those are the things that won't rust.

Example Dialog

Therapist: So what areas of your life do you want to change?

Client: I would like to eventually settle down and get married. My daughter has often told me she wants me to meet someone and she wants a mom. I want to be like those old people in the movies that have someone to sit on their front porch with as they get old.

Therapist: So in order to do this you would need to trust someone else wouldn't you.

Client: Yea I guess.

Therapist: What do you think you could do to help you achieve these things?

Client: I guess I could stop building walls between me and every person I become close with. Start giving people a chance instead of trying to run them off.

Contrasting Old and New Schemas

Areas to evaluate	Old Schema: "No relationship I have will last".	New Schema: "Maybe if I give people a try, I will find the right one"
Advantages short-term	"I won't get hurt".	"I will be happier in life"
Long-term	"I never have to care about anybody but myself"	"I will have someone to grow old with and to care for"
Disadvantages Short-term	"Don't have any emotional support for individuals"	"May get hurt in the process of finding someone new"
Long-term	"Will have a lack of social relationships", "Will grow old alone"	"What if I try and fail"? "I will only endure more pain with each new relationship"

