

HANDOUT : UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF UNMET CHILDHOOD NEEDS & MODES IN BORDERLINE PERSONALITY SYMPTOMS

SCHEMA MODE	UNMET CHILDHOOD NEEDS	ROLE IN BPD	BPD SYMPTOM
VULNERABLE CHILD Experiences intense feelings, emotional pain and fear become overwhelming and lead to flips to maladaptive coping modes that are identified as other BPD symptoms	Safety, predictability, stable base, love, nurturance, attention, acceptance, praise, empathy, guidance, protection, validation	Intense feelings – emotional pain and fear become overwhelming. Triggers flips to maladaptive coping modes that are BPD symptoms	Abandonment fears, real or imagined,
ANGRY CHILD Vents anger directly in response to perceived unmet core needs or unfair treatment	Guidance, validation of feelings and needs, healthy limits	Interpersonal problems as anger not just about present, so seen as inappropriate.	Intense anger, Stormy relationships, Emotional reactivity
IMPULSIVE CHILD Impulsively acts based on immediate desires for pleasure, without regard to limits or others needs (not related to core needs)	Guidance, healthy limits validation of feelings and needs	Also a source of interpersonal, work and legal problems. Action is usually self-damaging or potentially so.	Lack anger control, Impulsivity potentially self-damaging, SIB, suicide attempts, unstable identity, Stormy relationships
PUNITIVE PARENT Restricts, criticizes and punishes self and others	Rejects the needs of the child	Very common, can be a source of sib or suicide attempts	Self-injury, Suicide attempts (frequently)
DEMANDING PARENT Sets high expectations and level of responsibility to others, pressures self or others to achieve them		Common, origin of defectiveness	Self-injury (less frequent than in response to PPM)
AVOIDANCE Pushes others away, breaks connections, emotional withdrawal, isolates, avoids	n/a Unhealthy way to not experience the emotion the schema triggers or emotions that are part of a mode experience.	Common – continuum from “spacey” to severe dissociation or physical withdrawal	Dissociation, stress related transient paranoid episodes, Unstable identity, Emptiness
OVERCOMPENSATION Coping style of counterattack and control. Sometimes semi-adaptive		Common – angry protector or bully-attack modes	Intense inappropriate anger, Emotional reactivity
COMPLIANT SURRENDERER Compliance and dependence – gives up own needs for others, people pleasing		Common and often overlooked as can flip to overcompensation	Unstable sense of self Emptiness
MODE FLIPPING Frequent occurrence, exhausting and feels “crazy” and confusing to self & others	Matches the mode the person is currently in.	Source of instability in affect, behavior, relationships, self, transient psychosis, paranoia	All nine criteria.
HEALTH ADULT Is able to meet needs in healthy way	Lack of any childhood need leads to underdevelopment	Underdeveloped	Unstable sense of self.
HAPPY, JOYFUL CHILD feels loved, connected, content, satisfied	Love, nurturance, attention, validation, acceptance, safety.	Often non-existent.	Unstable sense of self.