

The use of Schema Therapy in sex offender intervention: Formulation and emotional change

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What's missing from standard sex offender treatment?

- Sex offender treatment mostly CBT based
- Neglects the underlying emotional processes that drive offending behaviour – often not active during treatment
- Learning takes place on a cognitive and behavioural level
- When those underlying feelings are later triggered they can overwhelm; dominate thinking and behaviour – learning not accessible in the moment
>re-offending

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SCHEMA THERAPY

Designed for use with more entrenched psychological problems

(Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003)

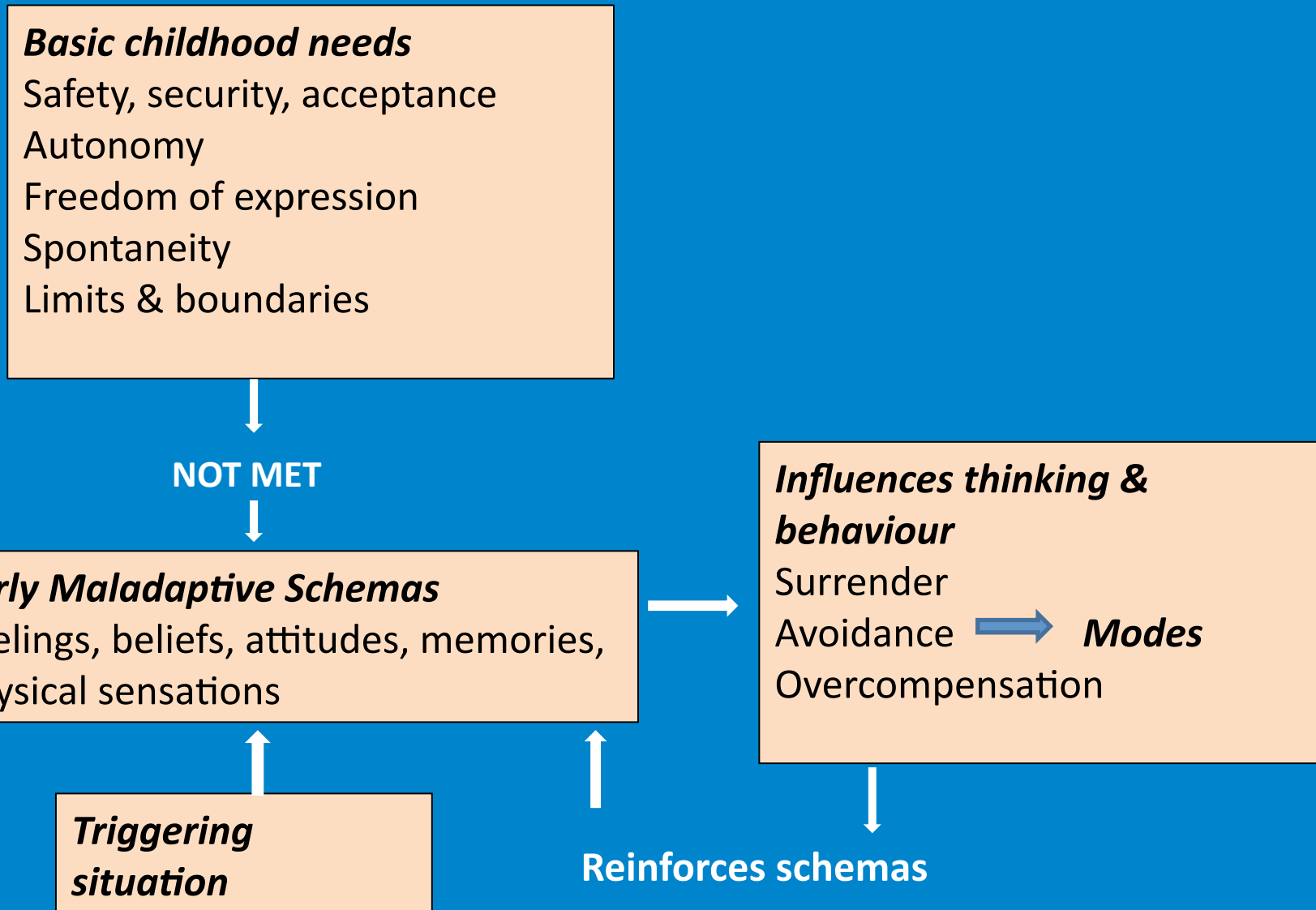
More recently been used in forensic settings

(eg, Bernstein, Arntz & de Vos, 2007)

Incorporated into sex offender treatment programme at MFPS in 2010

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Schema therapy in a nutshell



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Schemas

- Theme or life pattern
- Comprised of memories, emotions, cognitions, and bodily sensations
- Significantly influences the individual's behaviours, thoughts, feelings and relationships
- Develop through childhood and adolescence
- Dysfunctional to a significant degree
- Activated by internal/external triggers which relate to early experiences

Young (1990)

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Schemas

- Abandonment
- Mistrust/abuse
- Defectiveness
- Emotional deprivation
- Social isolation
- Negativity/pessimism
- Failure
- Vulnerability to harm
- Dependence/incompetence
- Enmeshment
- Approval seeking
- Emotional inhibition
- Punitiveness
- Unrelenting standards
- Entitlement
- Insufficient self control
- Subjugation
- Self sacrifice

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Schema Perpetuation

Coping styles develop early in life to prevent the individual continually having to experience overwhelming affect. They are maladaptive in the longer term as they serve to reinforce rather than heal the schema.

- **Schema overcompensation (fight)**
 - **Schema avoidance (flight)**
 - **Schema surrender (freeze)**
- Behaviour is seen as “schema driven” rather than part of the schema.

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Coping responses

- Surrender

Give in to the schema

- Overcompensation

Try to fight the schema but go too far

- Avoidance

Try to avoid the feelings or the triggering of the schema

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Modes

- Vulnerable child
- Angry child
- Impulsive child
- Enraged child
- Detached protector
- Detached self soother
- Angry protector
- Compliant surrenderer
- Punitive parent
- Demanding parent
- Self aggrandiser (confusion with entitlement)
- Bully attack
- Predator
- Conning manipulative
- Overcontroller
- ***Healthy adult***

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Using schema therapy in sex offender intervention

- Identify the schemas and modes involved in offending
- Weaken those schemas & modes and strengthen the healthy adult mode > reduce risk of re-offending
- See offending behaviour as part of a particular mode
 - Less threatening
- Distance > reduce shame > reduce defensiveness > better engagement > increased effectiveness and greater reflection

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Father leaving – my fault, criticism, bullying at school, mum leaving him alone

DEFECTIVENESS

ABANDONMENT

INSUFFICIENT
SELF
CONTROL

Vulnerable
child

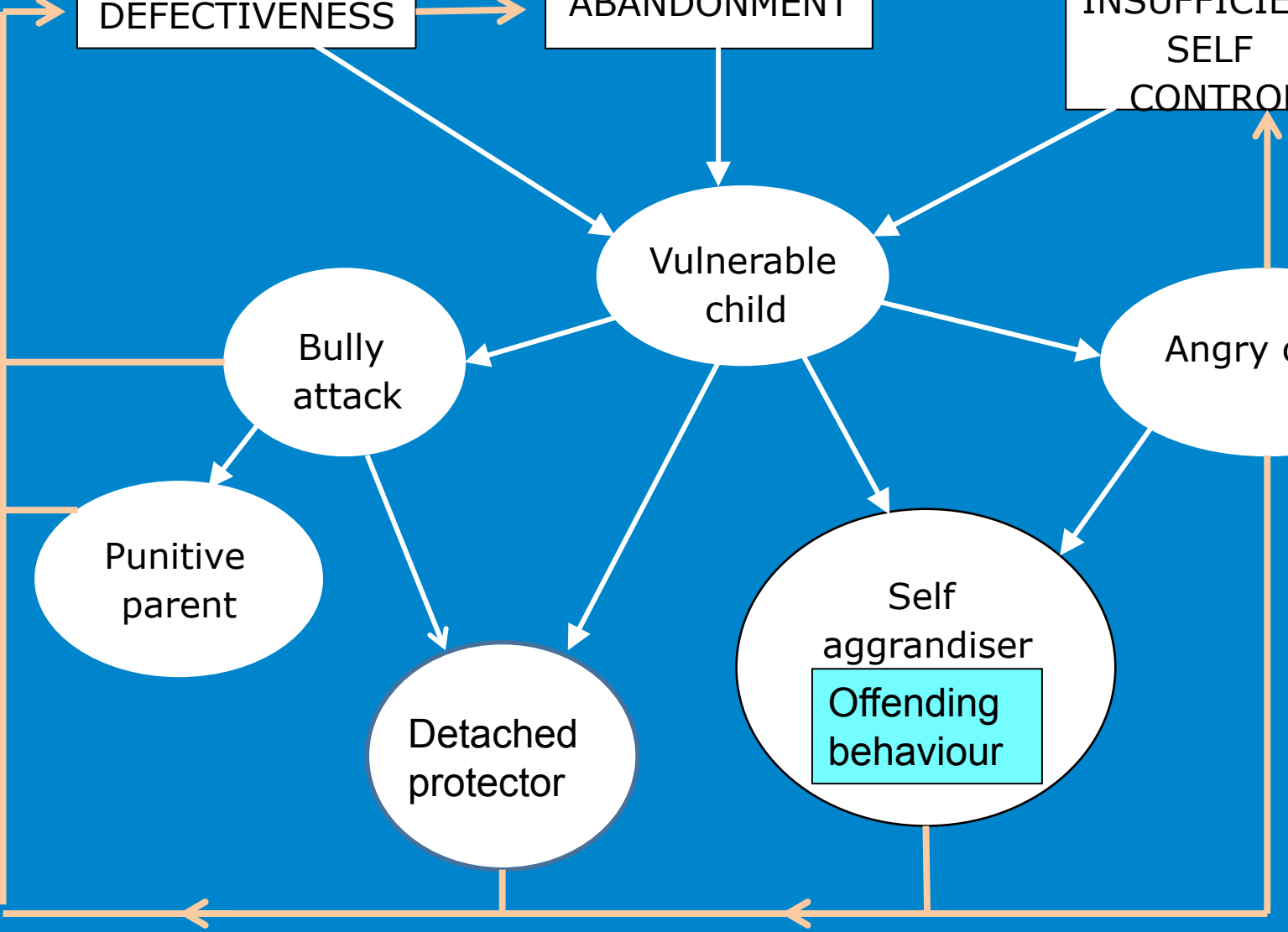
Bully
attack

Angry
child

Punitive
parent

Detached
protector

Self
aggrandiser
Offending
behaviour



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Property of NOTA 2017 MFPS model

- Level one: Introductory group – offence focused, CBT, education, develop understanding of offending behaviour and generate risk management strategies
- Level 2: Intermediate group – begin to look underneath the surface, develop Schema Therapy formulation and begin to notice schemas and modes, change response to healthy adult, continue education
- Level 3: Individual therapy to address schemas and modes involved in offending

Methods of change

- Responding to activation of schemas in a healthy adult way > schemas and modes not getting reinforced > eventually weaken.
- Chair work: change dynamics between different modes > strengthen healthy adult.
- Imagery re-scripting: re-processes the experiences linked to the origin of the schemas and modes > weakens schemas

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Imagery re-scripting

- Produces change on a deep emotional level
- Activate the schemas and modes involved in offending – live in the room
- Working directly on relevant feelings, attitudes, beliefs
- Re-process the childhood experiences > change the feelings and beliefs

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Chair work

- Explore the origins of the modes in the vulnerable child and unmet needs
- Externalise the mode dynamics
- Recognise patterns
- Break into patterns
- Practice healthy adult response to other modes
- Practice moving from other modes into healthy adult

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What does ST add to sex offender

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Enhances understanding of, and emotional connection to, the causes of offending

Reduces shame, allowing for more self examination

Identifies specific targets for interventions

Weakens the underlying emotional processes linked to offending

Makes learning more accessible

- Any questions?
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