

What is Schema Therapy?

Schema Therapy (ST) is an integrative, evolving model for psychotherapy that combines aspects of cognitive, behavioural, psychodynamic, and gestalt models, drawing on attachment and developmental theory. Schema Therapy places emphasis on the childhood origins of many psychological problems, with 'Early Maladaptive Schemas' defined as self-defeating emotional and cognitive patterns that develop in early childhood and are subsequently reinforced and strengthened throughout life. Schema Therapy is particularly useful for clients with more entrenched difficulties, including chronic depression, emerging 'personality disorder', complex trauma, ODD. Schema Therapy already has a superior evidence base compared with CBT for adults for these types of problems. For chronic, complex and entrenched problems such as these, we need to consider more sophisticated treatments and offer greater patient choice. Preliminary research findings suggest that ST-CA may be an ideal approach for working with this population.

Why Schema Therapy for Children and Adolescents (ST-CA)?

Schema Therapy for Children and Adolescents has become a hot topic within Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and the world of psychotherapy in general. The approach has quickly gained popularity among clinicians and mental health services for its high success rates for difficult to treat children, adolescents and parents with more severe, chronic, entrenched difficulties who do not respond to first line approaches. This includes the significant proportion of children and adolescents who do not engage in CBT, or don't respond to CBT (or showed an initial response and then relapse). For an overview of the rationale for using it as an alternative to CBT with children please click [here](#) (Interview with Ruth Holt, Canberra).



The screenshot shows the top of a webpage from 'mental health today'. It includes a search bar and a newsletter sign-up field. Below the navigation menu, the article title 'What are the benefits of schema therapy for young people?' is displayed, along with the date '27 October 2020'. A short paragraph of text follows, mentioning 'Ruth Holt, co-author of Schema Therapy for Children and Adolescents'. Below the text is a photograph of a woman in a child-friendly room holding a sign with a smiley face.

For more information about ST-CA please visit the website: www.schematherapy-for-children.de.

Does ST-CA work?

The concept of ST-CA was developed “by practitioners, for practitioners” (Preface: Loose et al., 2020). So why has ST-CA become a “hot topic” within the CBT world? Before we look at the list of empirical data, I would like to share my personal impressions to WHY it has taken off as such a popular therapeutic approach for working with children and adolescents. The main reason seems to be it has high face validity. This approach resonates strongly both with clients and practitioners. Practitioners report that when they use ST-CA approaches and techniques, they are surprised at the immediate positive effects. As one of the founders of this approach, I see some profound changes in the way that practitioners work after attending ST-CA seminars/workshops.

Firstly, the ST-CA training programme introduces practitioners to a unique integration of a range of psychotherapy concepts (mainly based on attachment and gestalt models, CBT, psychodynamic). Secondly, practitioners are encouraged to test the model and ST-CA techniques on themselves, to enable them to experience a sense of the model from the “inside out”. The depth of this training provides practitioners with a sense of how powerful this approach can be. Typical feedback from the course includes the following: “ST-CA really works...I have found it to be extremely helpful, ...and not only that, it’s actually fun, for clients as well as for therapists”.

Following this training, therapists will be able to:

- Develop powerful skills in deep attunement, empathy and validation of clients’ feelings and emotional needs (with children, adolescents and families)
- Use schema therapy techniques to enhance the therapeutic relationship, and facilitate greater openness and trust in order to explore and better understand the roots of problems/symptoms
- Develop a ST-CA case conceptualization, by integrating ABC model, needs, schemas, modes, symptoms.
- Build and strengthen an elaborated therapeutic relationship, including a deeper understanding of the problems, and leading to improved motivation of behavioural modifications.
- Learn skills in how to integrate adaptations of CBT procedures in order to break entrenched behavioural patterns, e.g by use of role play, and exposure exercises.

Clinical experience indicates that the ST-CA model is a powerful approach, particularly with more complex clients. Many clinicians have reported that it has transformed their practice. So, what empirical data do we have to support the feasibility and effectiveness of ST-CA so far?

Research in Schema Therapy for Children, Adolescents, and Parents

last update: March 3, 2023

The empirical data for feasibility and clinical effectiveness of ST-CA is beginning to emerge, with preliminary case series and quasi-experimental studies listed below. Many of listed studies deal with theoretical and conceptual issues, e.g. prevalence of schemas and modes, or the relationship between emotional needs, schemas, coping strategies and/or clinical symptoms. Preliminary clinical trials have explored outcomes of ST-CA with complex adolescent populations, including the reduction of externalizing aggressive behaviours with antisocial personality traits/disorders. Some multiple or single case studies point out not only the feasibility of ST-CA but also the positive results on reducing clinical symptoms, underlining the potential of ST-CA for inpatient as well as outpatient settings. Recent publications have also confirmed validity of ST-CA questionnaires, including an illustrated inventory in ST-CA. Further, the importance of supporting professional teams who work with challenging clients (e.g. in a 24/7 treatment context) is evaluated in a quasi-randomised trial (SafePath), indicating that Schema Therapy may contribute to a warm and supportive group climate with less repressive interventions in secure residential youth care.

Please feel free to contact me for positive or critical, and constructive feedback in order to extend and improve this (certainly non-exhaustive) list. (Email: contact@schematherapy-for-children.de)

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Preliminary research studies and small RCTs with children/adolescents:

Karimipour, A. , Asgari, P. , Makvandi, B., & Johari Fard, R. (2021). Effects of Schema Therapy for Children and Adolescents on the Externalizing Behaviors of the Adolescents Referred to the Counseling Centers in Ahvaz, Iran. *Int J Health Life Sci.*In Press(In Press):e118076. doi: 10.5812/ijhls.118076.

Pourjaberi, B., DashtBozorgi, Z. (2019). The Effectiveness of Schema Therapy on Eating Disorder and Rumination of Obese Adolescent Girls. *Community Health Journal*, 13(1), 1-10. doi: 10.22123/chj.2019.178471.1275

Roelofs, J., Muris, P., van Wesemael, D., Broers, N. J., Shaw, I., & Farrell, J. (2016). Group-Schematherapy for Adolescents: Results from a Naturalistic Multiple Case Study. *Journal of child and family studies*, 25, 2246–2257. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0391-z>

Van Wijk-Herbrink, M. (2018). Schema Therapy in adolescents with externalizing behavior problems: Bridging theory and practice.

Van Wijk-Herbrink, M., Broers, N., Bernstein, D. (2017). Schema Therapy in Adolescents with Disruptive Behavior Disorders. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 16(3), 261-279
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14999013.2017.1352053>

Van Wijk-Herbrink, M., Arntz, A., Broers, N., Roelofs, J. & Bernstein, D. (2021) A Schema Therapy Based Milieu in Secure Residential Youth Care: Effects on Aggression, Group Climate, Repressive Staff Interventions, and Team Functioning, *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth*, 38:3, 289-306, DOI: [10.1080/0886571X.2019.1692758](https://doi.org/10.1080/0886571X.2019.1692758)

Publications in Journals about Schema Therapy with Children, Adolescents, Parents and/or Care workers in residential youth care.

Alizadeh, A., Kakavand, A. & Jomehri, F. (2015). The effectiveness of schema therapy for children with cancer to improve depression symptoms. *Journal UMP Social Sciences and Technology Management*, 3(3), 618-622.

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- Loose, C., Meyer, F. & Pietrowsky, R. (2018). The Dusseldorf Illustrated Schema Questionnaire for Children (DISC). *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 31, 7.
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- Roelofs, J., Muris, P. E. H. M., & Lobbestael, J. (2016). Acting and feeling like a vulnerable child, an internalized "bad" parent, or a healthy person: the assessment of schema modes in non-clinical adolescents. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 30(4), 469–482.
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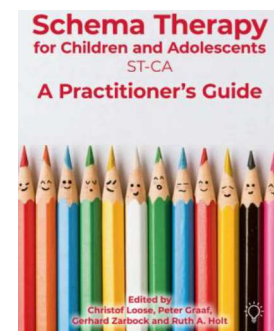
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Yadegarfar, N. & Yadegarfar, M. (2021). The Influence of Media as a Mediator between Parenting Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas among Children Aged 8-11. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Behavior*. Volume 9:53.

Wong, Q.J.J., Boulton, K.A., Reyes, N., Han, J., & Torok, M. (2021). The English Version of the Schema Inventory for Children: Psychometric Evaluation of a Measure of Early Maladaptive Schemas in a Primary School-Aged Sample. DOI: 10.1177/10731911211051281.

Books (in English and other languages)

Loose, C. Graaf, P. Zarbock, G., & Holt, R.A.(Editors)(2020). *Schema Therapy with Children and Adolescents: A Practitioner's Guide*. UK: Pavilion Publishing and Media Ltd.



Loose, C. Graaf, P. & Zarbock, G. (Editors.)(2015). *Schematherapie met kinderen en jongeren*. Uitgever: Nieuwezijds B.V., Uitgeverij.

Loose, C. Graaf, P. & Zarbock, G. (Editors.)(2017). *LA SCHEMA THERAPY CON I BAMBINI E GLI ADOLESCENTI*. Pubblico: pubblico specialistico, ISC.

Loose, C. Graaf, P. & Zarbock, G. (Editors.)(2018). *Terapia Schematów Dzieci I Młodzieży*. Wydawca: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne / GWP.

Loose, C. Graaf, P. & Zarbock, G. (Editors)(2018). *Çocuk ve Ergenler için Şema Terapi*. Yayıncı: Psikonet Yayınları.

Louis, J.P., Louis, K.M. (2015). *Good enough parenting: an in-depth perspective on meeting core emotional needs and avoiding exasperation*. New York: Morgan James Publishing.

Roelofs, J., Boots, M. & van Wijk-Herbrink, M.F. (2021). *Toegepaste schematherapie bij kinderen en adolescenten*. Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.

Van Wijk-Herbrink, M. F. (2018) *Schema Therapy in adolescents with externalizing behavior problems: Bridging theory and practice*. Dissertation. Universiteit Maastricht.

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ST-CA Research presented on Congresses/Conferences – in English

- Achermann, M., Houwing, H., Zanchelli, D., & Wöckel, L. (2019). Schema therapeutic inpatient treatment of a 14-year-old girl with depression. A way to feel better. Oral presentation in Vienna. 18th International Congress of ESCAP.
- Dresbach, E. (2016). Schema Therapy in Adolescents experiencing Peer-Victimization. Concept and Case Study. Oral Presentation in Vienna: ISST-Conference.
- Galimzyanova, M. (2014). Individual and Group Schema Therapy with a 10-year-old boy with school-anxiety. Oral Presentation in Istanbul: ISST-Conference.
- Galimzyanova, M. (2016). Fairy tales in Schema Therapy. Oral Presentation in Vienna: ISST-Conference.
- Galimzyanova, M. & Romanova, E. (2018). Early Maladaptive Schemas, Parent-Child Relationships and Self-Attitude of Adolescents. Oral Presentation. Amsterdam: ISST-Conference 2018.
- Krahmer, M. & Wöckel, L. (2019). Schema therapeutic outpatient treatment after one year DBT-A in a 17-year-old girl with NSSI, PTSD, anorexia nervosa and social phobia. Oral presentation in Vienna. 18th International Congress of ESCAP.
- Loose, C. (2010). Schema Therapy for Children. Proposal of Modification. Poster. Berlin: ISST-Conference.
- Loose, C. (2012). New Approaches for Schema Therapy with Children. In-Congress Workshop in New York.
- Loose, C. (2014). Schema and mode driven CBT with an 11-year-old boy with OCD. Oral presentation. Oral Presentation in Istanbul: ISST-Conference.
- Loose, C. (2017). Evaluation of randomized controlled trial of outpatient schema therapy for children with separation and social anxiety: "Understanding and overcoming fears". Oral presentation. WPA XVII World Congress of Psychiatry Berlin 2017, hosted by DGPPN.
- Loose, C. (2018). Schema therapeutic outpatient treatment of a 15-year-old boy with hypochondria against the background of a car accident caused paraplegia early in childhood. Oral Presentation. Amsterdam: ISST-Conference 2018.
- Loose, C. (2019). Pictorial Representation of Early Maladaptive Schemas and Modes. Poster. Berlin: WCBCT 2019.
- Loose, C. (2021). Telehealth in ST-CA. Oral Presentation. Virtual Summit of ISST.
- Loose, C., Liebertz, N., Mai, S., Schaub, I., & Pietrowsky, R. (2016). Schema Penguin Interview (SPI). Assessment of Early Maladaptive Schemas in Preschoolers. Poster. Stockholm: 46th Annual EABCT Congress CBT.
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- Loose, C., Liebertz, N., Mai S., Schaub, I. & Pietrowsky, R. (2016). Schema Penguin Interview - Assessment of EMS in Preschoolers. Oral Presentation in Vienna: ISST-Conference.
- Neumann, U. & Knollmann, M. (2019). Inpatient schema-/ modebased therapy in a 16-year-old adolescent with school absenteeism – an example. Oral presentation in Vienna. 18th International Congress of ESCAP.
- Romanova, E. & Rozova, U. (2018). Inter-relations between the parent's early maladaptive schemas and their attitude to children. Oral Presentation. Amsterdam: ISST-Conference 2018.
- Schmaal, T. (2014). Developing an Innovative treatment Plan for a Child with Selective Mutism: a Process-Oriented Case Study. Oral presentation. Istanbul: ISST-Conference.
- Spitzli, J., Heitzer, S., Ackermann, T., Hungerbühler, C., Zanchelli, D., & Wöckel, L. (2019). Obsessive compulsive disorder with comorbid encopresis in a 6-year-old girl: schema therapy – how work with parents can change the case conceptualization. Oral presentation in Vienna. 18th International Congress of ESCAP.

Publications in Journals (in German)

- Loose, C. (2013). Schema- und modusgeleitete Verhaltenstherapie eines 11-jährigen Jungen mit Zwangsstörung. *Verhaltenstherapie und Verhaltensmedizin*, 34(2), 178-194.
- Loose, C. (2014). Schematherapie mit Kindern und Jugendlichen. *Verhaltenstherapie & Verhaltensmedizin*, 35 (3), 233-245.
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Chapters/Books/DVDs (in German)

- Ferreira de Vasconcellos, C. (2020). Schematherapeutische Gruppentherapie mit Kindern/Jugendlichen. In D. Mattke & M. Pröstler (Hrsg.): *Formen ambulanter Gruppentherapie* (S. 191-200). Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- Dresbach, E. (2021). *Schematherapie mit Kindern und Jugendlichen. 75 Therapiekarten*. Weinheim: Beltz.
- Geerdink, M. T., Jongman, E. J. & Scholing, A. (2011). Schematherapie mit Adoleszenten. In E. Roediger & G. Jacob: *Fortschritte der Schematherapie. Konzepte und Anwendungen* (S. 113-121). Göttingen: Hogrefe.

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- Loose, C. Graaf, P. & Zarbock, G. (Hrsg.)(2013). Schematherapie mit Kindern und Jugendlichen. Weinheim: Beltz.
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ST-CA Research presented on Congresses/Conferences – in German

- Loose, C. (2015). Pinguin-Interview - Inventar zur Erfassung von Schemadispositionen im Vorschulalter. München: XXXIV. DGKJP-Kongress.
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- Loose, C. (2019). Reparenting – Gibt es ein Zuviel? Key-Note. Köln: 4. Beltz Schematherapie-Kongress.
- Loose, C. (2019). Positive Schematherapie: Erhebung und Stärkung. Workshop. Bochum: 15. Jahreskongress Psychotherapie „Wissenschaft-Praxis“.
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More info about ST-CA also on social media

