



Below is an example of one maladaptive schema and the coping modes that might occur with this mode.

Jaz has experienced recurrent episodes of depression since she was 15 and has found therapy helpful but even outside of depressive episodes she has consistently had the feeling that she can't do anything right and feels that she will never succeed. Jaz recalls always being behind in primary school because she has dyslexia and remembers being picked on by teachers and peers for being slow. She also felt inferior to her brothers who were popular, smart, and good at sports, nothing she did seemed to match up to them. In secondary school and university she performed strongly but she couldn't shake this feeling that she was behind. Now in her 30s, Jaz has a successful work role, but she feels like it will slip away from her at any point. She says at work she presents so differently she is an absolute perfectionist but whenever someone compliments her achievements she is quick to dismiss them. Jaz also has a partner who is semi-famous and well-liked; this just makes her feel like she'll never live up to her partner's success and that at any point her partner will leave for someone good enough. The reason she is coming to therapy is because she keeps putting off a seemingly simple training course that would lead to a promotion and big pay-rise at work.

Jaz has a "failure" schema where she has a core belief that she will inevitably fail, or, is fundamentally inadequate relative to one's peers in areas of achievement. The failure schema can involve beliefs that one is: stupid, inept, untalented, lower in status, or less successful than others. Jaz has learned to cope with these feelings in different ways. She has developed a "helpless surrender" side where she gives in to the belief that she is not as good at others and focuses on others (particularly her brothers and partner's) successes and how she does not live up to them. This protects Jaz by "getting in first" before someone else calls her inept she says how hopeless she is first. Jaz has also learned to cope with feeling like a failure by developing a "perfectionistic over-controller" where she focuses on being in control of getting everything right at work to try and minimise the times that she feels like a failure. Finally, Jaz has learned to cope by avoiding failure by not trying this "avoidant protector" side is what is making it hard for her to complete a relatively simple task at work, it protects her from having to take on a promotion where she may feel like a failure if she doesn't succeed (avoiding doesn't trigger her failure schema).

Although we can understand each of these "coping modes", these coping modes keep Jaz stuck and maintains this feeling that she is a failure. Working to understand these coping modes (where they come from and how they operate) begins the shift towards healing the underlying schemas.