

## Book Review

### **Breaking Negative Thinking Patterns: a schema therapy self-help and support book**

G. Jacob, H. Van Genderen and L. Seebauer

Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015. pp. 200, £16.99 (pb).

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As a self-help resource *Breaking Negative Thinking Patterns* makes the Schema Mode model accessible to a general audience for the first time (previous self-help publications in this area focus on schemas rather than schema modes). It is already a successful publication in the Netherlands and Germany and this translation into English comes with helpful worksheets throughout that can also be accessed digitally for ease of use. Frequent use of case examples drawn from a range of common difficulties bring the technical concepts to life and help readers feel that their problems are understood and shared, as do the well-observed illustrations that are light-hearted yet emotionally resonant.

Part One helps the reader understand and identify modes that may form the basis of their “negative thinking patterns” in nicely structured chapters that cover child, parent, compensatory and healthy schema modes. Coverage is appropriately comprehensive, although the unguided reader might not readily identify that some modes are not applicable to them and may mistakenly think that they need to complete all worksheets. Discussion of how to identify specific modes in others is a valuable addition to each chapter, which could facilitate understanding of schema mode driven patterns within relationships.

Part Two introduces change techniques, primarily guiding the reader through scripts for imagery exercises, in keeping with schema therapy practice. Imagery exercises are introduced thoughtfully, outlining only those that are potentially manageable when undertaken without therapist guidance. The authors are explicit in their decision not to include imagery confronting damaging parent modes as this is likely to be too challenging with self-direction alone; instead they recommend tasks that are cognitive rather than experiential. On occasions, further scripting detail might have been helpful for some readers undertaking certain imagery exercises.

This book is likely to be an indispensable accompaniment to schema therapy, providing therapists with a resource that will help to deepen clients’ understanding of modes beyond their in-session description. Individually selected worksheets from the book would make excellent homework tasks. Equally, a second source such as this, highlighting the drawbacks to coping modes alongside therapy, could help to speed the process by which the client recognizes that strategies providing short-term relief have substantial long-term costs.

Necessarily, the authors immediately introduce the biographical origins of schema modes and consequently the book may not be an easy read for some individuals who have yet to consider the personal impact of adverse childhood experiences and who read this without support. As a self-help guide undertaken without parallel therapy sessions this book is arguably most likely to suit those whose difficulties do not reach clinically significant levels

and who are able to engage relatively easily with psychological terminology and concepts (a helpful glossary is provided). The authors signpost therapy throughout the book and indicate when additional support should be sought and when exercises may be challenging.

*Breaking Negative Thinking Patterns* will clearly be of interest to therapists for its distillation of the essentials of the Schema Mode approach in an accessible manner that will complement therapy content.

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