

MINDFLOW PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES

Understanding Your Inner World

A psychoeducation guide for the Defectiveness Schema, Early Trauma & Abandonment Wounds

This guide is a companion to your therapy. It is not a clinical tool — it is an invitation to understand yourself with more compassion.

PART ONE

What Is the Defectiveness Schema?

A schema is a deep core belief — formed in childhood — about yourself and the world. The defectiveness schema says:

"There is something fundamentally wrong with me. I am flawed, unlovable, or not enough — and if people truly knew me, they would reject me."

This belief was not born from truth. It formed when childhood experiences of pain, neglect, or criticism led your young mind to one conclusion: *something must be wrong with me*. It may show up as persistent shame, hiding parts of yourself, difficulty accepting compliments, relentless self-criticism, or sabotaging relationships before others can reject you first.

PART TWO

How Early Trauma Shaped These Beliefs

Early childhood trauma — emotional, physical, or relational — leaves a lasting imprint on the nervous system. When a child experiences neglect, harsh criticism, or unpredictability, they cannot understand that the adults in their life are struggling. They internalise: *"This is happening because of me."*

These trauma responses were survival adaptations. In adulthood they can look like:

You Might Notice...	...And Also
Hypervigilance — scanning for danger	Difficulty identifying your own needs
Emotional numbing or shutting down	Expecting punishment or rejection
People-pleasing to stay safe	Shame spirals after making mistakes
Difficulty trusting others	Overworking to 'prove' your worth

These are not character flaws. They are learned responses to real experiences.

PART THREE

The Abandonment Wound

Abandonment — whether physical, emotional, or unpredictable — creates a deep fear: *"The people I love will leave me. I must cling, withdraw, or make myself indispensable — or face being alone."* This wound often intertwines with the defectiveness schema: *"People leave because I am not enough."* Together, these beliefs can create cycles of anxiety in relationships, fear of intimacy, or pushing people away before they can leave first. Intense emotional responses when relationships feel uncertain are not 'too much' — they are a nervous system trying to protect you from pain it has felt before.

This resource is psychoeducational and does not constitute psychological treatment or advice. If you are experiencing significant distress, please speak with a registered mental health professional.

PART FOUR

The Path Toward Healing

Healing is not about erasing the past — it is about creating a new relationship with it.

In Therapy	Between Sessions
Gently identifying and challenging core beliefs	Noticing schema activation — without judgment
Processing early memories safely and gradually	Practising self-compassion when the critic is loud
Understanding younger parts carrying old pain	Grounding exercises to regulate your nervous system
Building trust through the therapeutic relationship	Journalling moments where you felt 'enough'

A NOTE FOR YOU

Compassionate Reminders

You were not born believing you were broken. You learned it — and what was learned can, with time and care, be unlearned.

The fact that you are here, doing this work, is evidence of your strength — not your weakness.

Healing is not linear. Hard days are part of the process, not evidence that you have failed.

You deserved care, safety, and love as a child. That you did not always receive it was not your fault — **and it does not define your worth.**

GROUNDING & REFLECTION

When Things Feel Overwhelming

Grounding Techniques	Self-Compassion Tools
5-4-3-2-1: Name 5 things you see, 4 touch, 3 hear, 2 smell, 1 taste.	"This feeling is hard, but it will pass. I have survived hard things before."
One hand on chest, one on belly. Take 3 slow, intentional breaths.	Write what your inner critic says — then write what a kind friend would say instead.
Name 10 objects in the room. You are here. You are safe right now.	Reach out — to your therapist, a trusted person, or a crisis line if needed.

Reflection: When do I notice this schema most?	Reflection: What would I say to a friend who felt this way?
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If this guide surfaced feelings that are bigger than expected, please be gentle with yourself — and know that individual therapy is a space to work through what came up. You are welcome to reach out to us at Mindflow.