



# Schema:

## FAILURE TO ACHIEVE

This guide was designed to be used after watching the [Character Therapy series](#) found on [Sofiya's YouTube channel](#). Please watch that as you're doing these worksheets, or you may get stuck on something you don't understand!

DEEP DIVE INTO SCHEMAS FOR CHARACTERS

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# About Me

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## All About Sofiya

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Sofiya is an award-winning author and mental health professional who loves baking, hiking, and doing things with her family.

Her debut novel ANYA AND THE DRAGON is a Sydney Taylor Book Award Honor. The sequel is pretty good, too.

Find her online basically everywhere!



## About Schema Therapy

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Schemas are not diagnoses, even though you can use them to inform or elaborate upon diagnoses. Essentially, they're a way to focus therapy on particular topics or experiences, and can give the therapist a road map to follow. The schemas in this guide are simplified and are not for use on real humans (just imaginary ones!).

For more fun and helpful writing information, check out my website and [subscribe to my newsletter!](#)





# Failure to Achieve

## EVERYTHING I TOUCH TURNS TO CRAP

**PEOPLE WITH** the Failure to Achieve schema believe they are fundamentally less successful than their peers due to inherent inadequacy.

**THOSE WITH** the Failure to Achieve schema are convinced they possess an inherent lack of ability, skill, or talent to achieve success. This can lead them to sabotaging any chance they have at real achievement, because they will self-limit by setting very low-level goals that they are guaranteed to successfully complete. They may also become competitive by putting down the accomplishments of others to highlight themselves.

**THIS SCHEMA** may begin in childhood due to parents or other attachment figures being highly critical and telling the child they are inept, stupid, or weak. This schema also may be the result of a person with goals that are not realistic, and the inability to achieve this unrealistic goal is “proof” that the person is a failure.

# *Failure to Achieve*

**OVERCOMPENSATION:** the opposite of the schema is true.

Diminishes the achievements of others.

Tries to meet perfectionistic standards to cover up feelings of failure.

Becomes an overachiever; is very critical of their perceived flaws.

**AVOIDANCE:** the schema does not exist.

Procrastinates on tasks.

Avoids new or difficult tasks.

Avoids setting goals that are ability-level appropriate.

**SURRENDER:** the schema is true.

Works far below ability level.

Unfavorably compares achievements with those of others.

Performs tasks in a halfhearted manner.



# Lie – Want – Truth – Wound

## WHAT'S YOUR CHARACTER'S FUNDAMENTAL INCORRECT BELIEF?

"Everything I do isn't as good as what other people can do."

"I'm a failure."

"Other people are more capable than I am in every relevant area."

"Other people are much more successful than I am."

## WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER THINK THEY NEED TO BE HAPPY?

Ex: "To find something easy that I can actually do."

## WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER ACTUALLY NEED TO BE HAPPY?

Ex: "To embrace my unique strengths and find my niche to excel in."

## WHAT CAUSED THIS BELIEF IN THE FIRST PLACE?

# Character Arc Outline

## INCORPORATING SCHEMAS INTO THE OUTLINE

- HOOK: THE LIE IS INTRODUCED VIA THE CHARACTERISTIC MOMENT AND REINFORCED BY THE “NORMAL WORLD.”
- PLOT TURN 1: THE LIE IS CHALLENGED WITH THE “NEW WORLD,” THE MC CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THE LIE AND PURSUE THE WANT.
- PINCH 1: MC UNABLE TO PURSUE THE LIE; FAILS WITHOUT REALIZING WHY; EVOLVES BELIEF IN THE LIE.
- MIDPOINT: MC SEES THE TRUTH BUT STILL FOLLOWS THE LIE.
- PINCH 2: ANTAGONIST REINFORCES THE LIE; MC TRAPPED BETWEEN THE LIE AND THE TRUTH.
- PLOT TURN 2: THE WANT IS WITHIN REACH, BUT NOW THE MC UNDERSTANDS THAT THE TRUTH IS THE BETTER WAY.
- RESOLUTION: MC REJECTS THE LIE FOR THE GREATER TRUTH.

## THE SEVEN POINT PLOT OUTLINE!

Unfamiliar with the Seven Point Plot outline? Check out [my video](#) on it, or Dan Wells' video series of his presentation given at the LTUE Conference in Provo, UT.

# Schema Operations

## USING SCHEMAS TO OVERCOME WRITER'S BLOCK

WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LIE?

WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO ENFORCE THE LIE?

WHAT COULD HAPPEN TO CHALLENGE THE LIE?



# Character Therapy

I HOPE YOU LEARNED SOMETHING COOL!

**NOW YOU SHOULD** have an idea of what the Failure to Achieve schema is, how it relates to your character's Lie, and also what the Lie, Want, Truth/Need, and Wound are.

**YOU SHOULD ALSO** understand schema coping modes, and how overcompensation, avoidance, and surrender all tie into the schemas themselves, and how your character handles the emotions that come along with schema triggers.

**REMEMBER TO USE** this guide with the [YouTube Character Therapy series](#)!

**IF YOU'RE INTERESTED** in learning more in-depth about Schema Therapy, the following books are amazing resources:

SCHEMA THERAPY: A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE  
EXPERIENCING SCHEMA THERAPY FROM THE INSIDE OUT

**ALSO, PLEASE CHECK OUT** K.M. Weiland's website, [www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com](http://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com), especially her Character Arcs series. Her website is super helpful. You won't regret taking a look!