



# Schema:

## ABANDONMENT / INSTABILITY

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!](#)



# Abandonment/Instability

## THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU WILL LEAVE YOU

**PEOPLE WITH** the Abandonment/Instability schema believe their loved ones will eventually leave them somehow. This can be in the form of breaking up a relationship, cheating, moving away, or dying.

**THOSE WITH** the Abandonment/Instability schema are constantly fearful of this, in their opinion, guaranteed abandonment, and they'll be hypervigilant about signs of this abandonment. When they perceive an impending abandonment, they can become excessively clingy, controlling, jealous of perceived competition, and may accuse their loved one of abandoning them for even the shortest separations.

**THIS SCHEMA** may begin in childhood due to parents or other attachment figures leaving or being unavailable, often due to alcohol or other substance abuse.



# Abandonment / Instability

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

Clings to (smothers) the loved one so much they end up pushing them away.

Attacks loved one for even tiny separations.

Tries to control the loved one so much they drive them away.

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

Avoids intimate relationships altogether.

May replace relationships with maladaptive actions, such as binge drinking.

**SURRENDER:** the schema is true.

Gets involved with loved ones who they know will leave them.

Gets involved with loved one who are emotionally or physically unavailable.

“Why do I always date guys who cheat on me?”



# Lie – Want – Truth – Wound

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

"I'm destined to be alone."

"There's no point in loving anyone, because they'll just go away."

"My loved one isn't sick but I'm pretty sure they're going to die soon anyway."

"I can't be myself or express my true feelings, or everyone will leave me."

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

Ex: "A relationship with someone I love."

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

Ex: "To understand that I'm not destined to be alone."

## 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 Abandonment/Instability 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!