Who can benefit from group schema therapy?

GST can help many people who want to work psychologically to overcome recurrent difficulties with issues such as self-criticism, low self-esteem, problems with relationships, unstable emotions and identity issues. Research demonstrates that schema therapy can be a highly effective treatment for many longer-term mental health problems, enabling recovery from recurrent anxiety, depression and personality difficulties.

GST is particularly suitable for people who:
- Want to use an explicit, structured model to make sense of things.
- Are interested to look at how their past has shaped their present.
- Would prefer active guidance and support from their therapists.
- Are seeking change at deep emotional level.
- May not have recovered via other forms of therapy.

Who provides group schema therapy?

Group Schema Therapy is provided by the Intensive Psychological Therapy Service (IPTS). If you’re wondering whether you’d be eligible, speak to the mental health professional who knows you best about whether a referral to IPTS may be suitable for you.
What is group schema therapy?

Group schema therapy (GST) is developed specifically for people who have longer-term emotional difficulties and problems with close relationships. The therapy targets change at the underlying patterns of emotion and belief that make up our ‘schemas’. It provides a structured framework for making sense our psychology and any difficulties we may experience. GST helps you to recognise how your earlier life influences the way you feel about yourself and your relationships, and shapes how you go about coping with life now.

In schema therapy we consider that there are different ‘parts’ to everyone’s experience – the ‘schema modes’. Therapy works to help you resolve the inner conflict and dysfunctional coping that can result. The ultimate goal of GST is to help you grow your ‘Healthy Adult’ mode, so that you recognise and meet your core emotional needs and develop balanced relationships.

What does group schema therapy involve?

GST involves a combination of weekly group sessions, plus a limited number of individual sessions. We aim to make sure that every group member feels safe, secure and valued. The group provides the opportunity for members to learn the model together and apply it to themselves in a mutually supportive environment. The therapists offer clear guidance - being warm, respectful, and setting limits where necessary. At times they may also highlight any unhelpful patterns they observe and confront you with the need for change. Your relationship with the therapists and others in the group can provide important opportunities for healing. Over time, we aim to enable group members to experience being part of a healthy ‘family’ group – an experience that may be new for many.

The four modules of therapy

Our GST programme starts with a brief introductory group designed to help you get orientated to the therapy. After this there are four separate modules, each lasting for 10 weeks at a time – Schema Education, Mode Management, Experiential, and Healthy Adult Group.

In Schema Education, we focus on helping you to understand yourself and your reactions in terms of your schema modes. The aim is to develop awareness of when your modes are operating and recognise their role in your difficulties. Participants explore both their current and past experiences to develop insights into how they came to think, feel and react in this way.

After Schema Education comes Mode Management. This module builds on the awareness you have developed to focus on active change. The group considers healthy responses to addressing emotions and confronts problem ways of coping. Participants deepen their understanding of their emotional needs and learn safe and effective ways to meet them in the ‘here and now’.

The next module is the Experiential Group, where the focus of therapy turns to core emotions and links with the past. This targets change at a deep emotional level, focusing on reprocessing painful experiences from the past and reconsidering their implications for you and your life. Expressive techniques including imagery and role play are used to help you heal.

In the final module, Healthy Adult Group, the emphasis is on strengthening your ability to meet your needs and break old patterns of problem behaviour. We encourage you to fully ‘digest’ the implications of therapy and implement any changes necessary for you to build a happy, fulfilling life.