

WSTD 2025

World Schema Therapy Day

'A day to share knowledge , exchange ideas, build bridges and foster collaboration '

An Online Programme on the 7th November 2025

Programme South Africa



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
SCHEMA THERAPY



WSTD 2025

World Schema Therapy Day



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Time: 14:00 - 19:30 (CET)

Registration:
R150 for South African HPCSA

Free for non-South Africans without CPD points

Hosted on Zoom

Registration:

<https://www.quicket.co.za/events/338922-world-schema-therapy-day-2025-south-africa/>

- **14:00** - Introduction to Schema Therapy- Presenter: Dr. Chantal Renton
- **15:00** - Adapting Schema Therapy Principles for Child Welfare: SafePath at the South African Children's Home - Presenter: Barbara Mntuyedwa, Alex Adams, Max Restifo-Bernstein (USA), Dr. David Bernstein (Netherlands), Mr. Jean-Pierre Hartmann
- **16:00** - Application of Schema Therapy for the Treatment of Eating Disorders - Presenter: Dr. Graham Alexander
- **17:00** - Stretch Break
- **17:30** - Early Maladaptive Schemas are Systems of Modes - Presenter: David Edwards
- **18:30** - • Ketamine-Assisted-Psychotherapy: Extending the Schema Therapy Framework - Presenter: Leisha Dav

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| Introduction to Schema Therapy |
| Chantal Renton |
| <p>Dr. Chantal Renton is a Clinical Psychologist with over 17 years of experience in private practice. For the past 11 years, she has specialised in Schema Therapy and is recognised as an Advanced Schema Therapist and certified Schema Therapy Supervisor by the International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST). In 2021, she completed her PhD on schema modes in eating disorders, reflecting her strong clinical and academic interest in this area. Dr. Renton has a particular focus on working with eating disorders, alongside adolescents and adults presenting with a range of complex difficulties. She contributes to the growth of Schema Therapy in South Africa through her involvement in training initiatives and by providing individual and group supervision internationally. Her clinical practice is based in Hillcrest, KwaZulu-Natal, where she offers therapy both in person and online.</p> |
| <p>Abstract</p> <p>Schema Therapy is an innovative, evidence-based psychotherapy that integrates elements from cognitive-behavioural, attachment, psychodynamic, and experiential traditions. Originally developed by Jeffrey Young to address entrenched personality patterns and chronic difficulties, schema therapy has since grown into a powerful and flexible model suitable for a wide range of psychological disorders. This introductory talk will provide psychologists with a clear overview of the schema therapy model. We will begin by exploring its theoretical roots and the integrative approach that underpins it. The concept of parts (schema modes) will be introduced and illustrated through a clinical vignette, followed by an example of a mode cycle to demonstrate how maladaptive patterns are maintained in everyday life. The session will then outline the goals of schema therapy and its unique focus on both cognitive understanding and experiential change. Participants will have the opportunity to observe powerful techniques in action through video demonstrations of imagery rescripting and chair work, core methods that bring about deep emotional shifts. We will also review the growing evidence base for schema therapy and highlight the clinical populations for which it has proven particularly effective, including personality disorders, chronic depression, eating disorders, and complex trauma. By the end of the talk, participants will gain a practical introduction to the schema therapy framework, an appreciation for its experiential methods, and a sense of how it can enrich their own therapeutic practice.</p> |

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| Adapting Schema Therapy Principles for Child Welfare: SafePath at the South African Children's Home |
| Barbara Mntuyedwa, Alex Adams, Max Restifo-Bernstein (USA) Dr. David Bernstein (Netherlands), Mr. Jean-Pierre Hartmann |
| <p>Barbara Mntuyedwa (South Africa) is a Senior Child Care Worker at SA Children's Home, where she plays a vital role in supporting the emotional and developmental needs of vulnerable children. With a deep passion for child welfare, she aspires to further her impact by pursuing a career in social work. Barbara's journey in this field is shaped by both professional experience and personal resilience. Becoming a mother at a young age taught her the value of determination and hard work—qualities that continue to</p> |

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drive her forward. She is committed to creating opportunities for the children she cares for, believing that strength and perseverance can transform lives.

Alex Adams (South Africa) is a dedicated Child and Youth Care Worker with nearly 15 years of experience in the sector. For the past four years, he has been a core team member at SA Children's Home, where he remains deeply committed to the well-being of the children in his care. Passionate about his work, Alex believes there is no career more purposeful, and he approaches every task with a strong sense of responsibility, punctuality, and dedication. His practice is guided by a commitment to continuous growth and ensuring that all decisions serve the best interests of the children and families He Works With.

Max Restifo-Bernstein (USA) is a documentary filmmaker with a passion for character driven storytelling. Max uses film, photography, animation, and projection mapping to create multimedia films and art installations. Max attained a degree in sociology and film from Skidmore College, New York, using his background in both disciplines to depict emotionally driven stories that enlighten his audience about social-economic issues. Max currently creates commercial films for Safe Path Solutions and the iModes Company, while working on his personal documentaries and art.

Dr. David Bernstein (Netherlands) is a Clinical Psychologist, researcher, and educator, recognized for his pioneering contributions to Schema Therapy. Based in the Netherlands, he formerly served as Professor of Forensic Psychotherapy at Maastricht University and was Vice President of the International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST). His expertise spans personality disorders, forensic psychology, childhood trauma, and psychotherapy, with over 130 publications and several books to his name. He developed Forensic Schema Therapy for offender populations and created the Bernstein iModes system, a visual tool for working with modes in therapy. As the Founder and CEO of SafePath, he now leads efforts to expand this care-team-based intervention worldwide.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Hartmann (South Africa) is a Clinical Psychologist based in South Africa, working in the public health sector to support the mental health needs of children, adolescents, and their families. He provides services across multiple primary care clinics and is actively involved in supervising clinical psychology interns. A certified Schema Therapist (Standard) and Attachment-Based Family Therapy practitioner (Level 1), Jean-Pierre is deeply committed to integrating evidence-based approaches into public mental health. His interests extend to Schema Therapy research, where he contributes to local studies exploring its impact. In addition to his public service work, he runs a small private practice.

Abstract:

In residential child and youth care centres across South Africa, overwhelmed caregivers are expected to meet the complex emotional needs of children who have survived abuse, neglect, and abandonment. These children often express their pain through anger, defiance, emotional shutdown, or withdrawal—leaving caregivers exhausted, reactive, and unsure how to help. With limited training and few support structures, many care workers are simply trying to survive the day.

SafePath is a practical, team-based intervention developed by Prof. David Bernstein, grounded in Schema Therapy principles and adapted for use by frontline staff. At the South African Children's Home in Cape Town, SafePath was introduced through regular coaching and visual tools (iModes) that helped caregivers name emotional patterns—both in the children and in themselves—and respond with brief, grounded actions that foster emotional safety and connection.

This session features a screening of *If We Give Up, They Give Up*, a 17-minute documentary created by cinematic storyteller Max Restifo-Bernstein. The film offers a vivid, emotionally resonant portrait of the daily struggles and triumphs of the care team. It captures how SafePath shifted the culture from crisis-

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driven to relational—restoring hope, empathy, and a sense of purpose.

Following the screening, a live panel discussion will be held with SafePath’s developer, Prof. Bernstein, alongside members of the local implementation team. The discussion will explore the practicalities of applying Schema Therapy principles in low-resource environments, the emotional toll of care work, and how a shared emotional language can transform both staff well-being and the lives of vulnerable children.

This case study illustrates how even modest interventions can lead to meaningful change—when staff are given tools that honour both their pain and their potential.

Application of Schema Therapy for the Treatment of Eating Disorders

Dr Graham Alexander

Dr. Graham Alexander qualified as a clinical psychologist at the University of Cape Town and immediately co-developed alongside Professor Daniel le Grange the first specialist eating disorders unit within the private psychiatric sector in South Africa. Between 1995 and 2016 he served as director of the Akeso Kenilworth Clinic and Crescent Clinic Eating Disorders Units. As part of a multidisciplinary team, Graham has also been the team psychologist on the Cape Town Bariatric Clinic since its inception in 2005. This clinic provides weight loss surgery for suitable candidates who meet the criteria for such surgery when they have completed a comprehensive assessment. A growing sector of Grahams practice involves the pre-operative psychological preparation of surgery candidates and extended post-operative psychotherapy for such individuals where it is indicated.

While initially trained in Kleinian analytic therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy, Graham has for more than a decade worked within the schema therapy model. Dissatisfied with the existing and most recognised models of treatment for eating disorders, Graham’s doctoral research explored the efficacy of the application of the schema mode model for eating disorders. Due to the promising research outcome of other schema therapists worldwide that this model is gaining momentum as a very promising treatment for eating disorders, especially complex and difficult cases.

Graham maintains a busy private practice from his home in Cape Town. He received advanced accreditation through the International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST) where he works with individuals, couples, and families across a broad range of conditions, especially depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and patients undergoing bariatric surgery.

Abstract:

Schema Therapy (ST) is an integrative therapeutic approach that combines elements of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), attachment and psychodynamic theory, and experiential techniques to address deeply rooted maladaptive patterns, or schemas, that contribute to psychological distress. While CBT-E has received vast research attention and is still widely regarded as the most effective eating disorders (ED) model, recovery rates remains disappointing. This presentation will reflect on the growing evidence in the application of ST in treating EDs, conditions that are invariably characterized by complex emotional and behavioural patterns. EDs are frequently associated with early maladaptive schemas (EMS) such as emotional deprivation, abandonment, mistrust/abuse, defectiveness/shame, emotional inhibition, unrelenting standards, and punitiveness. These EMSs drive disordered eating behaviours and perpetuate cycles of shame, guilt, and self-deprecation. ST

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targets these schemas by identifying and restructuring core beliefs, fostering healthier ways of coping, and addressing unmet emotional needs. Through techniques such as imagery rescripting, chair work, and cognitive restructuring, ST helps patients reprocess early and/or ongoing traumatic experiences that contribute to ED symptomatology. The therapy also emphasizes the therapeutic relationship as a corrective emotional experience, promoting self-compassion and emotional regulation. Research indicates that ST is particularly effective for patients with chronic or treatment-resistant EDs, as it addresses underlying personality traits and emotional vulnerabilities that many traditional interventions may overlook. This presentation will review empirical evidence supporting ST's efficacy in ED treatment, including studies demonstrating reductions in ED symptoms and improvements in emotional regulation and self-esteem. A case example will illustrate how ST can be tailored to individual schema profiles and enhancing treatment outcomes. By integrating cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal strategies, ST offers a promising framework for addressing the multifaceted nature of EDs, paving the way for more personalized and effective interventions.

Early maladaptive schemas are systems of modes

David Edwards

David Edwards (South Africa) is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice in Cape Town, with over four decades of experience working with longstanding emotional difficulties, trauma histories, and complex personality dynamics. A certified Schema Therapist, Supervisor, and Trainer with the International Society of Schema Therapy (ISST), he is Professor Emeritus at Rhodes University, where he trained psychologists from 1980 to 2009. David has authored numerous publications on schema therapy, trauma treatment, and psychotherapy integration, and served as President of the ISST from 2016 to 2020. He is a sought-after international presenter, known for his teaching on imagery rescripting, mode work, and reparenting in schema therapy

Abstract:

The relationship between early maladaptive schemas (schemas for short) and schema modes is often confusing even for experienced therapists. Recognizing that any schema needs to be understood as a system of modes can resolve this confusion. Young defines a schema as "A broad, pervasive theme or pattern." The names of the original 18 schemas point to the themes, but to understand the pattern we need to recognize the two features of any schema: 1) a Parent mode and a Child mode in a dyadic relationship which is essentially the working model (to use Bowlby's term) of self and other that is set up right at the beginning of life, even though it is elaborated later. Schemas become maladaptive when the parent (or other primary caretaker) fails to adequately meet the child's core needs. The Parent mode is always such a parent who is not, to use Winnicott's classic phrase, "a good enough mother" so that child experiences significant emotional distress in the form of vulnerable emotions (including sadness, shame and fear) and angry emotions (anger, defiance, rage). The other central feature is 2) the individual's particular set of coping modes that have developed to damp down or suppress the child's distress. Taken together, these elements of a mode system allow for the complexity of the complex patterns we see in practice. Another aspect that therapists often find confusing is that the names of some schemas (often called primary or unconditional) point to the emotional distress in the child (e.g. defectiveness/shame, abandonment, dependence/ incompetence). Other schema names (often called secondary or

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conditional) point to the coping aspect (e.g. subjugation, self-sacrifice, unrelenting standards). This presentation shows how, for any schema, we can't properly understand the "broad, pervasive theme or pattern" without understanding the full underlying mode structure.

Ketamine-Assisted-Psychotherapy: Extending the schema therapy framework

LEISHA DAVIES

Leisha Davies (Clinical Psychologist) has been working in the field of mental health for more than 15 years, providing support to individuals suffering from mental distress. She practices in South Africa and in the United Kingdom in both public health and in private settings.

Her primary treatment modality is schema therapy integrated with transpersonal psychology, psychodynamic self-psychology, somatic practices, and mindfulness. Leisha has completed a 14-month psychedelic practitioner training program. She also undertook training in Ketamine-Assisted-Psychotherapy with Dr Phil Wolfson, a leading specialist in this emerging field. Alongside her general practice, she currently offers ketamine-assisted psychotherapy for treatment resistant depression and some other mental health difficulties.

Leisha's presentation will discuss schema therapy enhanced with ketamine in a treatment-resistant depression case.

Abstract:

Ketamine is a drug with psychedelic properties that is currently used in medical settings to treat various mental health difficulties, chronic pain, and substance misuse disorders. This presentation will demonstrate how ketamine facilitated a patient with chronic treatment resistant depression to bypass the protective coping modes and take a deep dive into early childhood trauma underlying the depression. It enabled some profound shifts in fixed beliefs, perspective-taking and self-concept. Psychedelic compounds, like aspects of Schema Therapy, are highly experiential rather than intellectualised. They act as a vehicle for emotional processing of early developmental injuries towards transformation. The presentation will address Ketamine-Assisted-Psychotherapy versus Ketamine Therapy, the Limited Reparenting concept when working with altered states of consciousness, and some ethical aspects unique to psychedelic practice as an emerging field in psychiatry.