

## Introduction to The Compliant Surrender Mode

When the Compliant Surrender mode is active in our system, we find ourselves either accepting the “messages” we see in the world around us as fact or buying into the narrative being put forward by our own internal critics as completely accurate, without the ability to see these stories in any other way. For example, if my Internal Critics are telling me, I am defective and I should feel ashamed, I believe this to be true, and begin to behave accordingly trying desperately to avoid the emotional experiences attached to these debilitating messages. When blended with the parts that behave this way, we never take on difficult challenges, because we comply with the message that we will fail, and we work really hard to make sure we’re not exposed to those around us as being incompetent or defective in any way.

On the other side, dialectically speaking, when compliant to the messages we receive externally, we give in to what the people around us want us to do, we submit to their desires and do everything they say, giving in to their subjective narrative over our own thoughts, feelings, wants, and needs. This is usually done to “keep the peace” in some way, or to avoid an emotional experience that’s created by the possibility of rejection or abandonment if we speak up for what we want. When practiced externally with others, the Compliant Surrender Mode is often labeled as “people pleasing” or, “enabling” behaviour. When we surrender to the negative internal narrative, it is common for this to lead to a life of sadness, loneliness, and even depression, depending on the story our internal critics are putting out there in our thoughts.

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**“When I stepped into recovery, other than my use of substance, my coping mechanisms were completely unknown to me. My people pleasing behaviour was quickly identified as the new way for me to deal with my underlying issues.”**

~ Steven Morris RP

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People pleasing is often referenced as behaviour pattern that comes to the forefront when building a recovery lifestyle. In Schema Mode Therapy this is identified as the part of our personality that follows the behaviours of Compliant Surrender. Usually, in response to a fear of rejection, failure, shame, or any of the schema that are connected to a sense of abandonment. Compliant Surrender in relation to the external world, meant that I gave in to what the people around me wanted me to do, whatever their desires were. I did everything they wanted me to do, usually at the expense of my own thoughts and feelings to avoid the possibility of rejection or abandonment in some way.

This behaviour pattern allowed me to avoid confrontation in relationships and build a mirage of popularity that provided respite from my own faltering self esteem. However, over time, this way of dealing with my internal Vulnerable Child's fear of rejection, and the loneliness associated with it, caused a resentment to build that would manifest in angry outbursts of rage and verbal abuse. Constantly meeting the needs of others left me with a strengthened sense of disconnection and loneliness. My schema of social isolation would dominate my system, reminding me of the fact that nobody understood me, heard me, and at times even saw me.

The guilt and shame associated with this sense of loneliness was the hardest thing for me to deal with in the early part of my recovery journey. The temptation to escape was strong, I struggled with a desire to run away from everything I was expected to do, and my inner Angry Child would fight for dominance in my system with my state of Compliant Surrender. It was a constant battle of mode flipping that left me questioning my sanity on a regular basis. From anger to surrender, back and forth, dictated by what schema was dominating my beliefs at that time. Awareness for my stories and the parts of my personality that were activated in an attempt to navigate the beliefs associated with their hold on me was the only way I found to take the steps towards creating the Life I want to Live, not staying stuck in the life I used to be stuck in!!

Next, let's check in to see how you relate to this Mode in your own behaviours. Answer the questions below based on your personal experiences and the rating scale provided.

Never 0	Sometimes 1	50/50 2	Often 3	Always 4
Description				Score
When I'm in social settings, I find myself trying hard to please people, avoiding conflict, confrontation, or rejection from them, by doing what they want me to do.				
When I am activated, my own internal narrative takes control of my behaviours, I give in to what I think I have to do, or who I think I am, without any question.				

Based on the scores you gave for the questions above, and the way you relate to the description provided on the previous pages, how Relevant is the Compliant Surrender Mode to you in your life? Add the two scores together to calculate your prevalence score. On a scale of 0 – 8, 0 being not present at all, and 8 being present in my life every day, rate your experience of the Compliant Surrender Mode.

My Compliant Surrender Mode has a prevalence score of \_\_\_/8.

On the next page, take the time to explore your experience of the Compliant Surrender Mode, see if you can identify how you feel when this Mode is active, how you are thinking when this Mode is active, what you do when this Mode is active, and what situations you might need to be aware of that can activate this way of thinking in your personality system.

- a. When I am in the Compliant Surrender Mode, I experience the following feelings (List the emotions you experience in the Compliant Surrender Mode, focus on the feelings in your system when you are giving in to an internal narrative, or the demands of others).

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- b. When I am in the Compliant Surrender Mode, I am having the following thoughts (List the thoughts you are having when you're in the Compliant Surrender Mode, be specific, focus on thoughts that point out how the story in your system is an accurate one, how the narrative has to be true, and how there is no alternative to what you are hearing).

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- c. When I am in the Compliant Surrender Mode, I behave in the following ways (List the things you do, the way you act, and how you react when you're in the Compliant Surrender Mode).

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- d. The following situations are likely to be involved in triggering my Compliant Surrender Mode (List the situations you are aware of that have activated this mode of behaviour in the past).

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- e. When I am in the Compliant Surrender Mode, I can use the following skills to support me with the emotional distress I am experiencing in my personality system. List the different skills of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy you can use to manage the emotions being held by the Compliant Surrender Mode. Try to list the skills in the order they will be effective for you to use. Start with Mindfulness, then focus on Distress Tolerance, and then look at Emotion Regulation.

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- f. The ways I can practice these skills to develop them as part of my ability to cope with the emotional experience of my own Compliant Surrender Mode are as follows: Describe the way you can practice these skills, what would it take to implement them into your daily routines?

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