

Schema of Entitlement

When the schema of Entitlement is activated in our system, we often have the belief that we are superior to other people entitled to special rights and privileges or not bound by the rules of normal social interaction. This often involves an insistence that we should be able to do or have whatever it is that we want at this particular point in time. When dominant, this belief is rigidly in place regardless of what's realistic, what other people might consider to be reasonable, or what the cost might be to those involved, either financially, emotionally, or psychologically.

In its extreme, there can also be an exaggerated focus on superiority. For example, being among the most successful, the most famous, or the wealthiest person in our social network. Predominantly this is done to achieve feelings that revolve around some sort of power or control. The entitlement or grandiosity schema can often include excessive competitiveness towards other people, with a focus on their domination. Remember, this is usually, but not always developed as an extreme protection mechanism for the vulnerability underneath the surface, and it is often created as a polar opposite to the true feelings of self.

“There are 3 different ways that entitlement shows up inside of any recovery journey, Dependent Entitlement, Impulsive Entitlement, and Spoiled Entitlement, I had to work with them along the way.”

~ Steven Morris RP

While working my recovery lifestyle and Living the Life I wanted to Live, I had to build an understanding for the many different parts of my personality. During this process, I came across a part that had a general sense of entitlement. To my surprise, this part was something that was present in my system on a regular basis. At first, this was a really difficult thing for me to acknowledge, as there's generally a pretty negative connotation that gets attached to the word entitlement in society. Once I was able to overcome my own internal judgements about the word itself, I was able to see that there was definitely a part of my personality that fell into this way of being whenever certain stories were activated and my system was feeling challenged.

First, I was confronted by a part of my personality that was “spoiled.” When I was blended with this part, I became demanding and controlling, I wanted everything my way, and when other people didn't give me what it was that I wanted, I usually flipped into an angry child mode that would usually result in me basically having an adult version of a temper tantrum.

Next there was a part of me that was struggling with an entitlement that revolved around dependency on others to “fix” my problems. Which, when blended, had me entitled to the support of others in a particular way. I would often place myself in a weak, incompetent, or needy role in my relationships, and then expect other people to be step in and take care of me so I could feel loved and cared for in a way that was meeting my unmet needs.

Finally, I was confronted by a part of me that was entitled to my impulsive behaviours. This was a deeply ingrained pattern of behaviour that had been around for a very long time. When blended, I had extreme difficulty controlling my behaviour and my feelings, my impulse control was almost nonexistent, and I would regularly act out on my desires without any regard for the consequences of my actions. I had trouble tolerating any sense of frustration in my system when I couldn’t do the things I was expected to do, which would usually result in me flipping into my angry child mode again in an attempt to control the out-of-control emotional state I found myself in.

Accepting that these were parts of my personality was the first step I had to take in changing the narrative that was triggering their presence in my system. I had to step into my fear of not getting what I wanted, my fear of not being rescued every time I felt that someone should rescue me, and my fear of not being able to do what I wanted to do, when I wanted to do it.

Next, let’s check in to see how you relate to this schema. 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
I sometimes feel like I shouldn't have to follow the normal rules and conventions other people do, and I can do what I want to do when I want to do it.				
I can't seem to discipline myself to complete routine, boring tasks or to control my emotions. Sometimes it bothers me when people try to tell me what to do.				

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 schema of Entitlement 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 schema of Entitlement.

My Schema of Entitlement has a prevalence score of ___/8.

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

- a. How does the schema of Entitlement impact your life when it's present in your system, what are the stories that show up for you, how do you know that it's present in your thoughts and feelings?

- b. How do you currently cope with this schema when it is activated in your system, in other words, what do you do when you feel this way, how do you normally behave?

- c. What are some new things you can do to cope with this schema when you are aware of its presence in your system, what would help you process the story in a healthy way? (Try to think in terms of the skill we learn in DBT)

- d. What would be a more balanced way of seeing the world when this schema is activated in your system, what would you say to someone you knew who was dealing with this type of story?
