

Stalmeisters, D., & Brannigan, C. (2011). A preliminary exploration into the prevalence of early maladaptive schemas in a group of people with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome. *Counselling Psychology Review*, 26, 34-42.

Background: Research into Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and the impact that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is having on this disabling illness is increasing. However, although schemas have been associated with ME/CFS, research into this relationship does not appear evident.

Aims: The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of schemas as described by Young, Klosko and Weishaar (2003), namely Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) in people with ME/CFS.

Method: 40 people with ME/CFS and 40 people from a non-clinical population completed Young's Schema Questionnaire (YSQ-S3).

Results: Both mean and frequency scores were analysed. The t-test indicated that the schema social isolation was significantly prevalent in the ME/CFS population, however, few people experienced this as an early maladaptive schema. Frequency scores which identified percentages at a 'therapeutically' significant level revealed that the schemas. Unrelenting Standards (URS) and Self-Sacrifice were dominant in both groups. URS was endorsed by 47.5 per cent of the ME/CFS group and by 25 per cent of the non-clinical population. The schema Self-Sacrifice was endorsed by 27.5 per cent of the ME/CFS group and 25 per cent of the nonclinical population.

Conclusion: The paper suggests that given the prevalence of the schemas URS and Self-Sacrifice it might be beneficial to assess for these schemas with a view to working with them therapeutically. Potentially the schemas may contribute to the perpetuation of ME/CFS affecting the individual's management and experience of the illness. Additionally, because of the degree of social isolation identified in the ME/CFS group, it is suggested that delivering treatment in groups could go some way to reducing the social isolation experienced by people with this debilitating illness. However, further research in both these areas is necessary.