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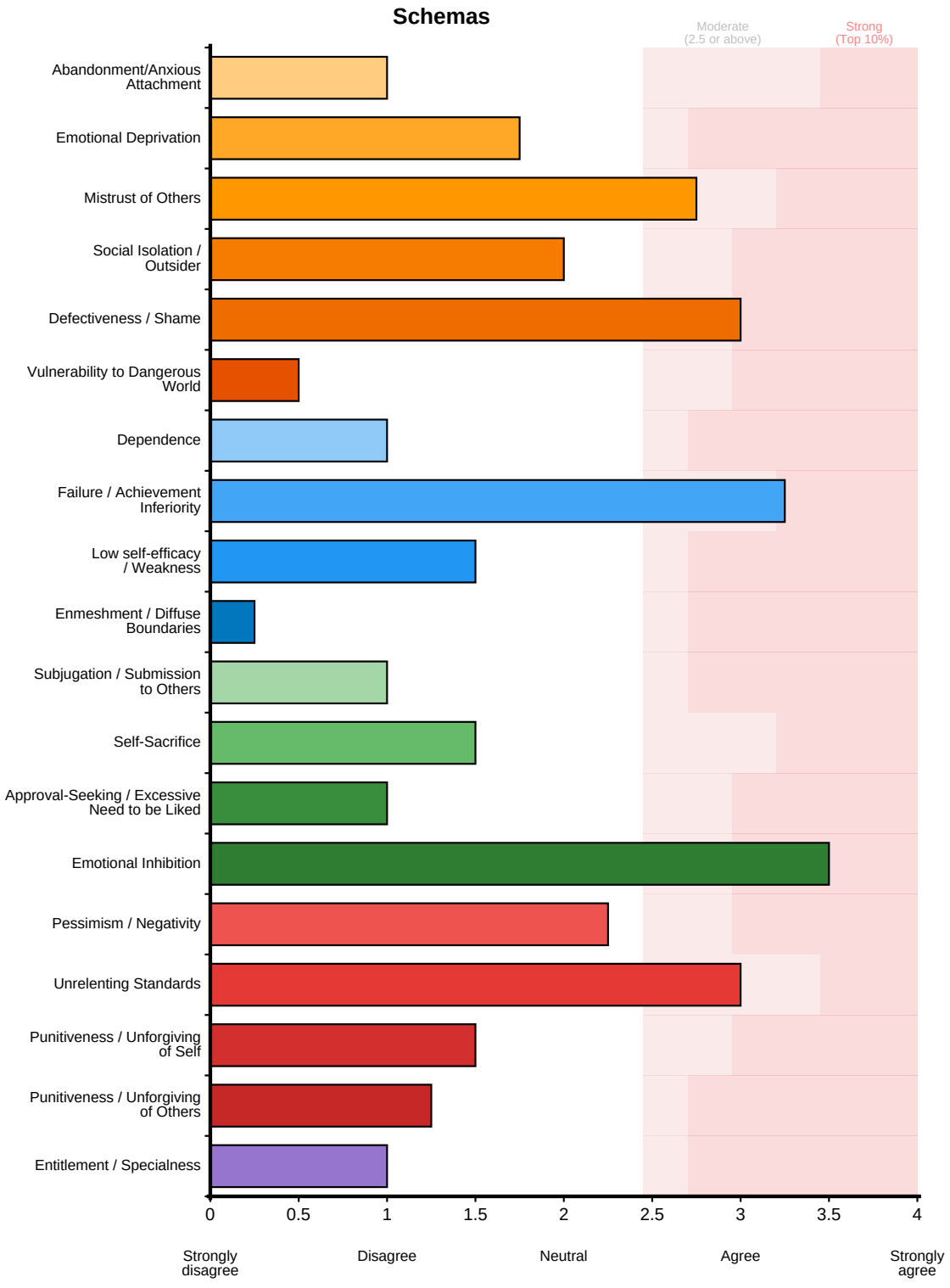
Maladaptive Schema Scale - Young Schema Aligned (MSS-YSQ)

Client Name	Client A	*Date administered*	26 Nov 2026
Date of birth (age)	1 Jan 2000 (26)	*Time taken*	14s
Assessor	Dr Emerson Bartholomew		



Client Name	Client A

Schemas

	Average Score (0-4)	Percent in Agreement	Belief
Abandonment / Anxious Attachment (Items 1-4)	1		
Emotional Deprivation (Items 5-8)	1.75	25	
Mistrust of Others (Items 9-12)	2.75	75	'I cannot trust people'
Social Isolation / Outsider (Items 13-16)	2		
Defectiveness / Shame (Items 17-20)	3	100	'I am unacceptable'
Vulnerability to Dangerous World (Items 21-24)	0.5		
Dependence (Items 25-28)	1	25	
Low Self-Efficacy / Weakness (Items 29-32)	1.5		
Failure / Achievement Inferiority (Items 33-36)	3.25	100	'I am not a successful person'
Enmeshment / Diffuse Boundaries (Items 37-40)	0.25		
Subjugation / Submission to Others (Items 41-44)	1		
Self-Sacrifice (Items 45-48)	1.5		
Approval-Seeking / Excessive Need to be Liked (Items 49-52)	1		
Emotional Inhibition (Items 53-56)	3.5	100	'I must suppress my emotions'
Pessimism / Negativity (Items 57-60)	2.25	25	
Unrelenting Standards (Items 61-64)	3	100	'I must perform exceptionally'
Punitiveness / Unforgiving of Self (Items 65-68)	1.5		
Punitiveness / Unforgiving of Others (Items 69-72)	1.25		
Entitlement / Specialness (Items 73-76)	1		

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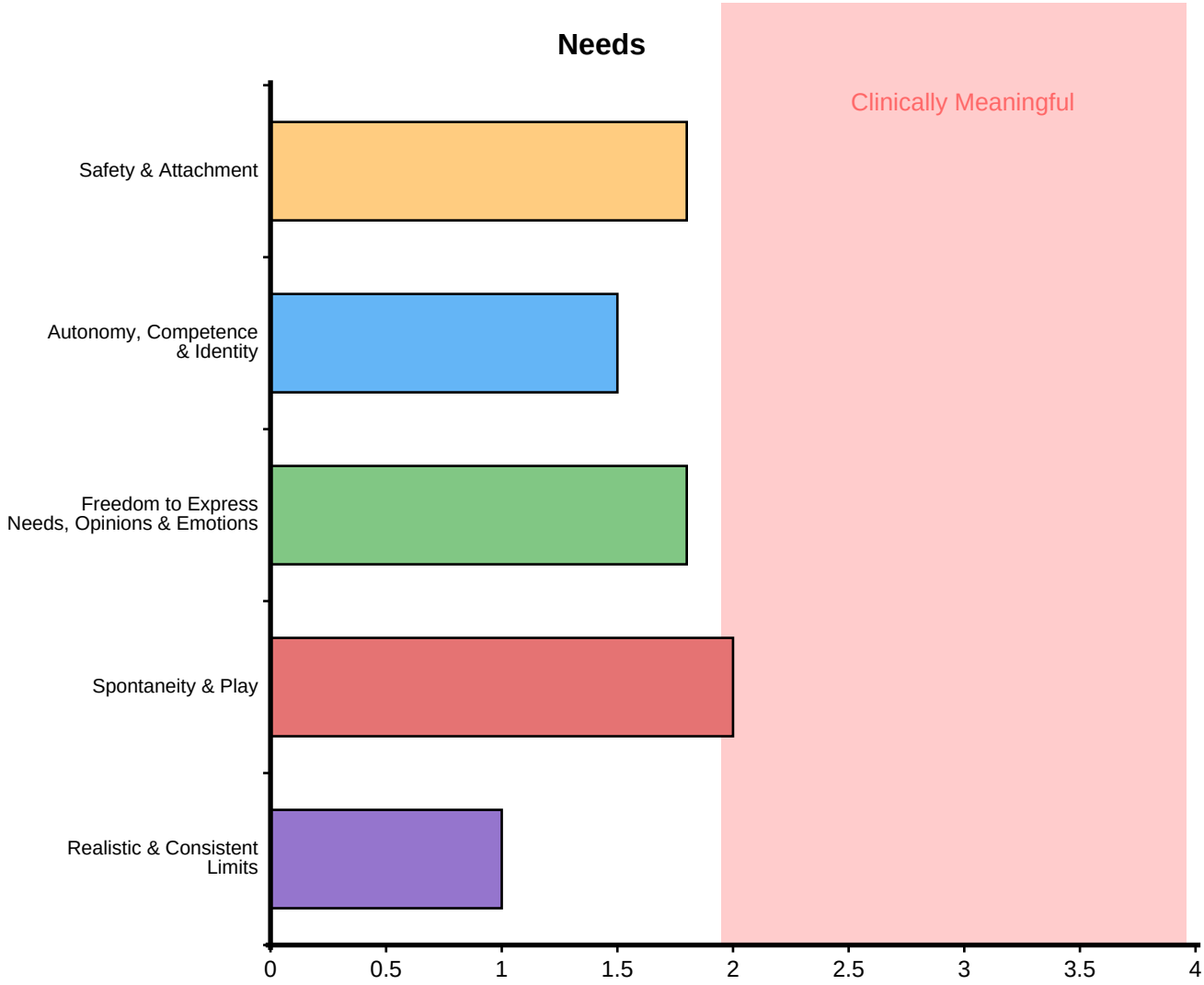

Needs

	Average Score (0-4)	Indication
Safety & Attachment (Items 1-24)	1.8	
Autonomy, Competence & Identity (Items 25-40)	1.5	
Freedom to Express Needs, Opinions & Emotions (Items 41-56)	1.8	
Spontaneity & Play (Items 57-72)	2	Disrupted need
Realistic & Consistent Limits (Items 73-76)	1	

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Interpretation

The client's responses indicate disrupted early childhood need for: 'Spontaneity & Play'.

The client scored above the threshold in the 'Emotional Inhibition', 'Failure / Achievement Inferiority' and 'Defectiveness / Shame' Schemas.

Emotional Inhibition:
This schema involves the restraint of emotions to avoid shame, a perceived loss of control or uncomfortable feelings. People with this schema may hold back feelings, avoid emotional engagement, or maintain a narrow emotional range in situations where a broader range of emotions would be typical or healthy. It involves a reluctance to express emotions, whether they are pleasurable or uncomfortable feelings (e.g. anger, joy, affection, or vulnerability). Individuals with this schema perceive emotions as unimportant or more detrimental than beneficial, leading them to ignore or suppress them as a protective measure. This suppression is often justified by an overemphasis on rationality and a devaluation of emotional experiences, leading to a stifled emotional life and difficulty in communicating their feelings and needs effectively. People with this schema may have trouble identifying their emotions, alexithymia or physical manifestations of emotions, such as muscle tightness or gastrointestinal symptoms. This schema can create barriers to intimate relationships and reduce overall emotional resilience.

Examples of what maintains the schema:
- When an individual repeatedly suppresses their emotions and tension accumulates, they may inadvertently release them in an uncontrolled outburst. The intensity of the outburst can reinforce the perceived risk of emotional expression.
- Conversely, the belief that emotions are dangerous can be reinforced when an individual avoids expressing emotions and nothing negative happens (i.e., they don't face rejection or conflict). This absence of negative outcomes can wrongly affirm their belief that suppressing emotions is a safe and effective strategy.

Examples of beliefs, assumptions or reactions related to the schema:
- Emotions are not useful, so I need to ignore them. (Strongly Agreed)
- My emotions do more harm than good. (Strongly Agreed)
- It is dangerous to feel emotions too strongly. (Agreed)

Possible origins of this schema:
- The child learned to inhibit emotion as a result of experiences where emotional expression was discouraged or punished, or met with ridicule, shaming, or judgement.
- This schema can develop as a coping mechanism for overwhelming feelings associated with trauma.
- The child was expected to suppress spontaneous urges in favour of rigid rules, duty, rationality, ethics, or keeping up appearances.
- Parental emotional needs came first, so there was no space for the child to express themselves or develop emotionally.
- The child was exposed to expressions of emotion in a way that felt overwhelming or threatening.
- Cultural norms, including those related to gender, can shape beliefs about the appropriateness and meaning of emotional expression.

Failure / Achievement Inferiority:
The belief that one is inferior in achievement or status or fundamentally inadequate compared to others. Whether accurate or exaggerated, this belief underpins an expectation that one will

inevitably fail in areas of achievement (education, career, relationships, financial status, etc.). There is often intense social comparison and a focus on extrinsic motivators for achievement. People with this schema may be hypersensitive to feedback and focus on their failings while discounting or dismissing areas of strength or accomplishments. Some individuals with this schema may believe their perceived lack of success is due to their own ineptitude, while others may believe it is due to external factors not within their control. External attribution may be protective of self-esteem but can also lead to a sense of helplessness or unfairness.

Examples of what maintains the schema:
- This schema can lead to avoidance of challenges due to the fear of further failure. This avoidance can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as refusing to engage in challenging activities can limit skills and successes.
- Selective exposure to highly successful individuals on social media may promote unfavourable comparisons.
- Cognitive bias can maintain the failure schema by overemphasising factors and experiences confirming their perceived failure and dismissing those that disconfirm the schema, such as personal strengths or successes.

Examples of beliefs, assumptions or reactions related to the schema:
- I compare my achievements with others and feel that I am not as successful. (Strongly Agreed)
- I feel inferior when I think of the accomplishments of others. (Agreed)
- I feel proud of my accomplishments. (R) (Disagreed)

Possible origins of this schema:
- Caregivers who were overly critical or set unrealistically high expectations.
- Frequent unfavourable comparisons with siblings or peers.
- Growing up in environments where achievements were not recognised or praised or where caregivers themselves were highly successful.
- Experiencing significant failures or setbacks during formative years, such as educational or social struggles, can lead children to believe that they are a failure.
- Caregivers who ridiculed failure.
- Excessive exposure to success-focussed social media without adequate contextual framing.
- Comparative lack of skill or achievement compared to peers, especially in an achievement focussed culture or family.

Defectiveness / Shame:
Central to the defectiveness schema is the belief that one is inherently flawed and inferior, along with the emotion of shame. People with this schema may fear that self-disclosure or revealing themselves to others would lead to rejection as they believe themselves to be unlovable and unworthy of acceptance. The schema is often associated with a hypersensitivity to real or imagined signs of rejection or criticism. Similarly, it can cause one's flaws to be in hyper-focus, overshadowing any recognition of personal strengths or positive qualities. The nature of the perceived flaws may be internally experienced (relating to experiences such as thoughts, urges or emotions) or externally observable (such as concern about social skills or appearance). People with this schema often feel unwanted, self-conscious and insecure around others and have a deep sense of shame about their perceived defects.

Examples of what maintains the schema:
- To protect from the feeling of shame associated with the exposure of one’s defectiveness, people with this schema may avoid intimacy, thereby limiting opportunities for disconfirming the schema.

- Because they feel undeserving of love, acceptance or respect, people with this schema may inadvertently “click” with and become involved with critical people who reinforce their feeling of defectiveness.
- Some people may attempt to conceal or overcome their perceived defects by overcompensating with perfectionism, people-pleasing, or arrogant behaviour, which can reinforce the belief that their true self is flawed and unacceptable.
- Cognitive bias can maintain the defectiveness schema by overemphasising factors and experiences that confirm one's perceived defectiveness and dismissing those that are inconsistent, such as personal strengths or positive feedback.

Examples of beliefs, assumptions or reactions related to the schema:
- I have reasons to be ashamed of myself and my character (Agreed)
- My flaws make me unlovable. (Agreed)
- I am inherently defective. (Agreed)

Possible origins of this schema:
- Critical, shaming, punishing or rejecting caregiving experiences in early life.
- Unfavourable comparisons to others or preferential treatment towards a sibling.
- Being blamed or made to feel like a disappointment by a caregiver.
- Ostracism by peers.
- Childhood abuse.

Unrelenting Standards:
This schema includes the belief that one must always pursue very high internalised standards of behaviour, performance and achievement. Striving to meet these expectations typically results in feelings of pressure. People with this schema tend to be hypercritical of themselves and may also project their high expectations onto and criticise others. Unrelenting standards typically present as an excessive attention to detail characteristic of perfectionism, or selective attention to mistakes and an underestimation of performance. People with this schema often have rigid rules across different areas of life, including unrealistically high work ambitions or ethical expectations. They may believe their worthiness is based on a high level of accomplishment and, therefore, have fragile self-esteem and find it difficult to slow down, relax or spend time on pleasurable activities. There can be a fear of failure or chronic dissatisfaction about achievements and a tendency to sacrifice personal health, relationships or leisure in the pursuit of productivity. This can lead to stress, burnout, health issues and strained relationships.

Examples of what maintains the schema:
- Cognitive bias often maintains unrelenting standards via selective attention to mistakes and conversely dismissing, minimising or underestimating achievements.
- This schema can also be maintained by having extremely high expectations and goals that leads to a sense of continually falling short.
- Productivity or achievement based media such as books or interviews with high achievers may be consumed excessively, ostensibly to improve skills, but in fact reinforcing the expectation of extremely high standards.
- Unrelenting standards and subsequent achievements are often extrinsically rewarded (admiration, money) and reinforce the schema, even if they come at great personal cost (health, happiness).
- Burnout can perpetuate the belief in the need for high standards, as it might be interpreted as a sign that one needs to work even harder or manage time even more effectively in the future.

Examples of beliefs, assumptions or reactions related to the schema:

- It is ok for me not to be a high performer. (R) (Disagreed)
- I should always perform at an extremely high level. (Agreed)
- Achieving high standards is more important than my own happiness. (Agreed)

Possible origins of this schema:
- Caregivers affection was conditional on the child meeting high expectations.
- Caregivers shamed or criticised the child when they failed to meet the excessively high standards expected.
- Caregivers modelled unrelenting standards in their own achievements and relationship with self.
- Early experiences of low levels of achievement or feeling inferior to peers and associated feelings of shame.
- Cultural or wider social influences that perpetuate a culture of achievement.

Mistrust of Others:
This schema involves the expectation that people are deceitful, unreliable and likely to hide their true motives. People with this schema typically believe that dishonesty and betrayal are common in interactions, fostering a general suspicion and wariness towards others. Feelings of anxiety and threat are frequently associated with this schema, alongside a heightened sensitivity to any signs of deception in others, even without objective evidence of such. This schema can impair even casual and friendly relationships, as their suspicion, guardedness, and defensiveness can be abrasive. Consequently, people with this schema may experience interpersonal difficulties or low levels of social support.

Examples of what maintains the schema:
- Heightened suspiciousness can lead to an abrasiveness in interpersonal interactions, which others may respond to by distancing themselves or hiding their intentions, thereby reinforcing the schema.
- Some people avoid self-disclosures or relationships altogether to protect themselves from the anticipated hurt caused by the expected betrayal. Therefore, they do not have the opportunity to have corrective experiences that challenge the validity of the schema.

Examples of beliefs, assumptions or reactions related to the schema:
- I don't believe what people say at face value. (Agreed)
- I don't trust people. (Agreed)
- People usually conceal their real intentions. (Agreed)

Possible origins of this schema:
- This schema typically emerges from experiences in childhood or adolescence where the individual directly experienced or repeatedly witnessed lying, cheating, manipulation or deception, usually by someone close to them such as a caregiver.
- Caregivers were distrusting of others and either modelled this to the child or explicitly warned the child not to trust others.

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Scoring and Interpretation Information

Scores for the 19 subscales are presented as an average score, where the number represents the level of agreement with the schema, as defined by the Likert scale:

Strongly Disagree = 0
Disagree = 1
Neutral = 2
Agree = 3
Strongly Agree = 4

Higher scores are indicative of stronger agreement with maladaptive schemas, and are associated with psychopathology and more dysfunctional relational, emotional or personal functioning.

A schema is considered to be moderate when an average score is 2.5 or more, while the schema is considered to be strong and of clinical significance when the average score is at or above the 90th percentile of a clinical sample, with a minimum of 2.75 so that strong always sits above moderate. Scores on the 90th percentile or higher indicate that the respondent scored in the top 10% compared with other patients receiving mental health care. The strong threshold varies across schemas from an average score of 2.75 (e.g. Dependence) to 3.5 (e.g. Abandonment / Anxious Attachment). A higher threshold for "strong" indicates that there is a higher prevalence of a "moderate" schema among mental health clients.

A strong schema represents broad agreement with the schemas that are of theoretical importance to schema therapy in addition to a score that deviates from typical patterns of responding.

Scores are also presented as the percentage of responses where the client “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with the items in the subscale, producing a “Percent in Agreement” metric.

In addition, scores are presented for each of the five early childhood needs. High scores on a need cluster strongly suggest that the cause of the schema is rooted in early childhood experiences. Scores of 2 or above are considered clinically meaningful and are suggestive of a childhood need that was chronically disrupted.

--Safety & Attachment--
-Abandonment / Anxious Attachment
-Emotional Deprivation
-Mistrust of Others
-Social Isolation / Outsider
-Defectiveness / Shame
-Vulnerability to Dangerous World

--Autonomy & Competence--
-Dependence
-Failure / Achievement Inferiority

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-Low Self-Efficacy / Weakness
-Enmeshment / Diffuse Boundaries

--Freedom to Express Needs, Opinions & Emotions--
-Subjugation / Submission to Others
-Self-Sacrifice
-Approval-Seeking / Excessive Need to be Liked
-Emotional Inhibition

--Spontaneity & Play--
-Pessimism / Negativity
-Unrelenting Standards
-Punitiveness / Unforgiving of Self
-Punitiveness / Unforgiving of Others

--Realistic & Consistent Limits--
-Entitlement / Specialness

Client Responses

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I fear that my important relationships will end unexpectedly.	0	**1**	2	3	4
2	I worry that people I love can't be there for me in a committed way.	0	**1**	2	3	4
3	I feel confident that other people will be there for me when I need them.	4	3	2	**1**	0
4	I worry about losing people that I rely on.	0	**1**	2	3	4
5	I have others I can depend on for advice and emotional support.	4	3	2	**1**	0
6	If I was in trouble, I wouldn't know who to call.	0	**1**	2	3	4
7	Other people don't care about my emotional needs.	0	**1**	2	3	4
8	I feel unsupported by others, so I wouldn't share my emotions.	0	1	2	3	**4**
9	People usually conceal their real intentions.	0	1	2	**3**	4
10	I don't trust people.	0	1	2	**3**	4

Client Name	Client A

Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
11	I don't believe what people say at face value.	0	1	2	**3**	4
12	People usually tell the truth.	4	3	**2**	1	0
13	I'm inherently different from everyone else.	0	1	**2**	3	4
14	I haven't met anyone that thinks like me.	0	1	**2**	3	4
15	I am typically accepted by people.	4	3	**2**	1	0
16	I am an outsider.	0	1	**2**	3	4
17	If people knew the real me, they wouldn't like me.	0	1	2	**3**	4
18	I am inherently defective.	0	1	2	**3**	4
19	My flaws make me unlovable.	0	1	2	**3**	4
20	I have reasons to be ashamed of myself and my character	0	1	2	**3**	4
21	I'm afraid of venturing too far because there are so many bad things happening.	0	**1**	2	3	4
22	The world is safe for me.	4	3	2	**1**	0
23	The world is a dangerous and unforgiving place, and I worry it will spiral into catastrophe.	**0**	1	2	3	4
24	The world is a bad place and will harm me.	**0**	1	2	3	4
25	I cannot take care of myself, so I need others to take care of me.	**0**	1	2	3	4
26	I feel incapable of managing daily tasks without help from others.	**0**	1	2	3	4
27	I often worry about making decisions on my own and prefer someone else to make them for me.	0	**1**	2	3	4
28	I feel confident making decisions on my own.	4	**3**	2	1	0
29	If a task is difficult, I'm unlikely to be able to accomplish it.	0	1	**2**	3	4

Client Name	Client A

Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
30	I can rarely come up with solutions to my own problems.	0	**1**	2	3	4
31	I can handle anything that comes my way.	4	3	**2**	1	0
32	Most problems are too hard for me to deal with.	0	**1**	2	3	4
33	Most other people have achieved more than me.	0	1	2	**3**	4
34	I feel proud of my accomplishments.	4	**3**	2	1	0
35	I feel inferior when I think of the accomplishments of others.	0	1	2	**3**	4
36	I compare my achievements with others and feel that I am not as successful.	0	1	2	3	**4**
37	I am responsible for the emotions of the person I am closest to.	0	**1**	2	3	4
38	With those closest to me, I don't know where my needs and emotions end and where theirs begin.	**0**	1	2	3	4
39	I am so close to someone it feels like I have merged with them.	**0**	1	2	3	4
40	The needs of the person closest to me consume me.	**0**	1	2	3	4
41	Other people know better than I do.	0	**1**	2	3	4
42	I should always do as I'm told.	0	**1**	2	3	4
43	Other people know what is best for me.	0	**1**	2	3	4
44	I feel like I have to let others take control in relationships.	0	**1**	2	3	4
45	I always prioritise others no matter what's going on for me.	0	1	**2**	3	4
46	I believe it is my duty to listen to other people's problems.	0	1	**2**	3	4
47	My needs are as important as other people's needs.	4	3	2	**1**	0
48	No matter how much I give to others, I can never give enough.	0	**1**	2	3	4

Client Name	Client A

Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
49	Gaining the approval of others is often more important to me than following my own desires.	0	**1**	2	3	4
50	I want people to like me, so I would tend to agree with people even if I know they are factually wrong.	0	**1**	2	3	4
51	Even if I don't like someone, I still strongly desire for them to like me.	0	**1**	2	3	4
52	I find it hard to make a decision unless I know what other people think.	0	**1**	2	3	4
53	Tuning into my emotions is helpful.	4	**3**	2	1	0
54	My emotions do more harm than good.	0	1	2	3	**4**
55	Emotions are not useful, so I need to ignore them.	0	1	2	3	**4**
56	It is dangerous to feel emotions too strongly.	0	1	2	**3**	4
57	Things almost always go wrong for me.	0	1	**2**	3	4
58	In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	4	3	**2**	1	0
59	Things inevitably don't go my way, so I prefer to expect the worst to avoid disappointment.	0	1	2	**3**	4
60	I am pessimistic about the future.	0	1	**2**	3	4
61	If I make a mistake, I can let it go easily.	4	**3**	2	1	0
62	Achieving high standards is more important than my own happiness.	0	1	2	**3**	4
63	I should always perform at an extremely high level.	0	1	2	**3**	4
64	It is ok for me not to be a high performer.	4	**3**	2	1	0
65	I try to be compassionate and understanding to myself when I make a mistake.	4	3	**2**	1	0
66	If something goes wrong, I shouldn't get away with it.	0	1	**2**	3	4
67	If I fail, I should suffer the consequences.	0	**1**	2	3	4

Client Name	Client A

Client Responses (cont.)

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
68	It doesn't matter how small a mistake I make is, I deserve to be punished for it.	0	1	2	3	4
69	I try to be compassionate and understanding to others when they make a mistake.	4	3	2	1	0
70	People should be held to account for their failings.	0	1	2	3	4
71	If someone fails, they should face the consequences.	0	1	2	3	4
72	People deserve to be disciplined for their mistakes.	0	1	2	3	4
73	When I ask someone for something they should agree to it.	0	1	2	3	4
74	I am above the usual rules that others follow.	0	1	2	3	4
75	Other people should appreciate how unique I am.	0	1	2	3	4
76	I deserve special privileges.	0	1	2	3	4