FREE TOOL · 10–15 MINUTES

The Leadership Schema Self-Check



36 statements, one scoring key, a one-page pattern profile and a four-step practice. Find the patterns most likely to run your leadership under pressure, and start choosing differently.

A free tool from the book *Schemas in Leadership: Uncover Your Hidden Power*

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Every leader is led by something

Beneath your strategy and experience runs an older current: patterns laid down long before you held a title. In *Schemas in Leadership* they are called **schemas**. They are not flaws. They began as intelligent childhood adaptations and now run the old program in a new setting.

Leadership concentrates pressure, then hands you power, and power amplifies whatever it touches. A small private pattern can become the weather a whole team lives in.

"The schema is the script. The mode is the actor who walks on and starts performing it."

— *Schemas in Leadership*, Daniela Aneva

How to use it

1. **Answer** the 36 statements for the person you are at work *under pressure*, not on holiday. Go with your first answer.
2. **Score** each pair on the key and shade your totals on the profile page.
3. **Pick** your top three patterns and notice how you usually cope with them.
4. **Practise** with your top pattern: Name, Honor, Choose, Rehearse.

1	2	3	4	5
Not like me	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very like me

A note on scope. This is a reflection tool for leadership development, not a psychological test or diagnosis. The 18 schemas come from Jeffrey Young's schema therapy; the statements here are written for leaders. If you notice persistent distress or patterns that feel unmanageable, work with a qualified mental health professional alongside your leadership work.

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STEP 1 · THE STATEMENTS (1–18)

At work, under pressure, how true is this of me?

1 Not like me · 2 Rarely
3 Sometimes · 4 Often
5 Very like me

Circle one number for each statement. Don't look ahead to the key until you have finished.

1	When a key person on my team goes quiet, I start bracing for them to leave.	1 2 3 4 5
2	I double-check what colleagues tell me; people usually have an angle.	1 2 3 4 5
3	I rarely ask for support. I assume no one would really understand what I carry.	1 2 3 4 5
4	If people saw how I really work behind the scenes, they would think less of me.	1 2 3 4 5
5	In leadership meetings I often feel like the outsider in the room.	1 2 3 4 5
6	Before a big decision, I need someone else to confirm it before I trust my own view.	1 2 3 4 5
7	When a bold option is on the table, I see the worst case first and most vividly.	1 2 3 4 5
8	My mood at work rises and falls with the mood of one or two key people.	1 2 3 4 5
9	However well things go, I expect to be found out as less capable than people think.	1 2 3 4 5
10	Rules that bind others should bend for me, given what I deliver.	1 2 3 4 5
11	I start strongly, then struggle to follow through on the dull parts.	1 2 3 4 5
12	I say yes in the meeting and resent it on the drive home.	1 2 3 4 5
13	I pick up my team's load before my own, and feel guilty when I don't.	1 2 3 4 5
14	Before I decide, I think about how it will look to the people above me.	1 2 3 4 5
15	When a plan is presented, I see what can go wrong long before what can go right.	1 2 3 4 5
16	People tell me I am hard to read.	1 2 3 4 5
17	When I reach a goal, I move the bar before I let myself feel it.	1 2 3 4 5
18	When someone makes a mistake, my first instinct is that there should be a consequence.	1 2 3 4 5

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STEP 1 · THE STATEMENTS (19–36)

Keep going. First answers are the most honest.

1 Not like me · 2 Rarely
3 Sometimes · 4 Often
5 Very like me

You are looking for patterns, not a perfect score. There are no right answers.

19	I keep a little distance at work so it hurts less when people move on.	1 2 3 4 5
20	I hold important information close until I am sure it cannot be used against me.	1 2 3 4 5
21	Warm moments at work, giving or receiving, make me a little uncomfortable.	1 2 3 4 5
22	Critical feedback lands as a verdict on who I am, not on what I did.	1 2 3 4 5
23	Even with my own team, I feel I do not quite belong.	1 2 3 4 5
24	I stay close to the detail because I am not sure things will hold without my checking.	1 2 3 4 5
25	I delay necessary risks until I feel completely safe, which rarely happens.	1 2 3 4 5
26	I find it hard to know what I think until I know what my boss or partner thinks.	1 2 3 4 5
27	Compared with my peers I feel behind, whatever the evidence says.	1 2 3 4 5
28	I get impatient when people expect me to adjust to their needs.	1 2 3 4 5
29	When I am frustrated, it shows before I have decided to show it.	1 2 3 4 5
30	I hold back my real view to avoid the cost of a disagreement.	1 2 3 4 5
31	I am running on empty and tell myself that is what good leaders do.	1 2 3 4 5
32	A week without recognition feels like a week I did not count.	1 2 3 4 5
33	Good news at work feels temporary; bad news feels like the truth.	1 2 3 4 5
34	Showing emotion at work feels like losing control.	1 2 3 4 5
35	Good enough is rarely good enough, for me or for my team.	1 2 3 4 5
36	I am harder on my own mistakes than I would ever be on a friend's.	1 2 3 4 5

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STEP 2 · THE SCORING KEY

Add each pair. Write the total (2–10).

Each schema has two statements, one in each half of the list.

DOMAIN	LEADERSHIP NAME / SCHEMA	WHAT IT DOES IN A LEADER	ADD	TOTAL
DISCONNECTION & REJECTION	**The Flight Risk** Abandonment / Instability	Braces for the people and stability you rely on to disappear.	1 + 19	
	The Siloed Fortress Mistrust / Abuse	Guards, controls and protects against being used.	2 + 20	
	The Cold Engine Emotional Deprivation	Runs on self-reliance; warmth is hard to give or receive.	3 + 21	
	The Glass House Defectiveness / Shame	Hides, polishes or defends so no flaw is exposed.	4 + 22	
	The Lone Star Social Isolation / Alienation	Feels outside every group, so withdraws.	5 + 23	
IMPAIRED AUTONOMY & PERFORMANCE	**The Bottleneck** Dependence / Incompetence	Leans on others, or over-controls to mask the doubt.	6 + 24	
	The Brake Vulnerability to Harm	Sees catastrophe ahead and stalls necessary risk.	7 + 25	
	The Mirror and the Maze Enmeshment / Undeveloped Self	Merges with others and loses a separate view.	8 + 26	
	The Impostor's Shadow Failure	Expects exposure, whatever the evidence of success.	9 + 27	
IMPAIRED LIMITS	**The Golden Cage** Entitlement / Grandiosity	Feels exempt from limits; empathy runs short.	10 + 28	
	The Whirlwind Insufficient Self-Control	Acts on impulse; follow-through and frustration suffer.	11 + 29	
OTHER-DIRECTEDNESS	**The Weight of Others** Subjugation	Gives in to avoid consequences; anger goes underground.	12 + 30	
	The Martyr Complex Self-Sacrifice	Puts everyone first, then runs dry and resents it.	13 + 31	
	The Approval Trap Approval / Recognition-Seeking	Steers by the audience rather than by values.	14 + 32	
OVERVIGILANCE & INHIBITION	**The Doom Loop** Negativity / Pessimism	Magnifies risk and discounts the good.	15 + 33	
	The Mask of Steel Emotional Inhibition	Hard to read, out of touch with own feelings.	16 + 34	
	The Endless Horizon Unrelenting Standards	Moves the bar, cannot rest, harsh inner judge.	17 + 35	
	The Judge's Gavel Punitiveness	Punishes mistakes; breeds fear and concealment.	18 + 36	

8–10 · Strong signal
Likely a core schema. It shows up most when stakes, exposure or power rise.

6–7 · Present under pressure
Quiet in calm weeks, may take the wheel in hard ones. Worth watching.

2–5 · Quiet for now
Not a current driver. Notice if a new role or new boss changes that.

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STEP 3 · YOUR ONE-PAGE PATTERN PROFILE

See your patterns at a glance

Shade each row from 2 up to your total. The tinted columns mark “present under pressure” (6–7) and “strong signal” (8–10).

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
The Flight Risk									
The Siloed Fortress									
The Cold Engine									
The Glass House									
The Lone Star									
The Bottleneck									
The Brake									
The Mirror and the Maze									
The Impostor's Shadow									
The Golden Cage									
The Whirlwind									
The Weight of Others									
The Martyr Complex									
The Approval Trap									
The Doom Loop									
The Mask of Steel									
The Endless Horizon									
The Judge's Gavel									

Ties? Choose the schema with a 5 in it, or the one you recognised fastest.

Where do my high scores cluster?

Disconnection & rejection: *can I rely on others, and do I belong?* · Impaired autonomy & performance: *can I function and succeed on my own?* · Impaired limits: *do I respect limits and regulate myself?* · Other-directedness: *how much do others' needs and approval steer me?* · Overvigilance & inhibition: *how tightly do I control feeling and risk?*

1 · My top pattern

Usual coping style: Surrender · Avoidance · Overcompensation

2 · Second pattern

Usual coping style: Surrender · Avoidance · Overcompensation

3 · Third pattern

Usual coping style: Surrender · Avoidance · Overcompensation

> **Same wound, opposite leaders.** The book's key insight: two leaders can carry the same schema and look like opposites. One **surrenders** (lives it as true), one **avoids** (arranges life so it never fires), one **overcompensates** (becomes its opposite). Most of us use a mix.

Which part of me walks on stage? Tick the protector you see most when your top pattern fires:

- Detached Protector: goes cold
- Compliant Surrenderer: gives in
- Overcompensator: takes control

STEP 4 · THE PRACTICE

Name, Honor, Choose, Rehearse

Take your top pattern through four steps. Insight on its own changes little; a small, practised choice changes a lot. The aim is the **Healthy Adult**: the part of you that can feel the old alarm without being run by it, and lead from your values.

01 Name

Say it plainly, in the moment: "This is my Endless Horizon talking." Naming creates a gap between you and the pattern.

My pattern, in my own words:

02 Honor

Ask what it once protected. Schemas were intelligent adaptations. Respect the old guard before you ask it to step back.

It protected me by:

03 Choose

At the next trigger, ask: what would my Healthy Adult choose, from my values rather than the old alarm?

Next time it fires, I will choose to:

04 Rehearse

Practise one small behaviour this week in a low-stakes moment, before you need it in a high-stakes one.

My rehearsal this week (when, where, with whom):

Catch it in the first ten minutes. When the pattern fires, jot down: the situation · what your body did · the instant story in your head · what you feared losing. Later the same day, ask which part was the old alarm and which part was a legitimate adult need.

This week's rehearsal log

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
Noticed the pattern					
Named it					
Chose differently					

Then run the same four steps with your second and third patterns in the weeks that follow.

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WHERE TO GO NEXT

From knowing your patterns to working with them

Free open house · Schemas in Leadership

One live hour with Daniela: the framework, the programme, and an honest answer to "is this right for me?" Bring your self-check results.

Monday 26 October · 12:00 PM ET

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Reserve your place: danielaaneva.com/open-houses/

The programme

Schemas in Leadership is a certification programme for coaches, HR and L&D professionals and leaders who want to work with the 18 schemas, in themselves and with others.

Starts Thursday 3 December · Thursdays 11:00 AM–3:00 PM ET · four days, live.

$1,650 · $1,450 for readers of the book

or a plan of 3 × $490

The book

Schemas in Leadership: Uncover Your Hidden Power walks through all 18 schemas, how they show up in leadership, what they cost and how they heal, then follows them into teams, culture, boardrooms and the moments that matter: decisions, feedback, conflict and delegation.

Available in paperback and Kindle on Amazon. Reading the book? You qualify for the reader price on the programme.

Daniela Aneva is an ICF Master Certified Coach (MCC), ACTC, ICF CSS and EMCC EIA Master Practitioner. All open houses and programmes: danielaaneva.com/open-houses/