

# Stimulating a Growth Mindset and Adaptive Schemas in Children via New Mind Creation

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## Abstract

Chronic toxic stress traps the developing brain in a survival mode, preventing the formation of adaptive schemas and the expression of core needs such as spontaneity and play. This article presents the “New Mind Creation” (NMC) procedure as a method to bridge the gap between a child’s current neural pathways and their optimal developmental potential [1, 2]. Practice-based evidence suggests that the transdiagnostic ReAttach intervention [3] influences symptom networks, leading to significant reductions in internalizing and externalizing problems in children with mental health problems. By fostering positive identifications and applying the NMC technique, ReAttach promotes secure attachment and facilitates cognitive restructuring, creativity, spontaneity and play.

**Keywords:** *Growth Mindset, New Mind Creation (NMC), ReAttach*

## Introduction

In contemporary psychology and pedagogy, the concept of a “Growth Mindset” has emerged as a fundamental pillar for understanding human learning capacity and resilience. At its core, a growth mindset is the conviction that intellectual and socio-emotional abilities are not static traits but can be developed through dedication, effort, and effective strategies [4, 5, 6]. This belief system is intrinsically linked to the concept of neuroplasticity: the brain’s remarkable ability to reorganize itself and forge new neural connections in response to learning and experience [7, 8, 9].

The importance of developing a growth mindset for optimizing learning and development cannot be overstated. Research indicates that this mindset functions as a catalyst for academic success by strengthening self-belief and improving effort regulation [4]. When learners believe they can grow, they are more likely to employ effective metacognitive strategies

[5, 10]. This impact extends beyond general intelligence into specific domains, such as mathematics, where a growth mindset increases “grit” and persistence [9, 11].

Furthermore, a growth mindset acts as a vital protective factor for mental well-being. Studies have shown that even brief interventions can significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and internalizing problems in both neurotypical and autistic youth [12, 13]. In professional and high-pressure environments, such as medical training or competitive sports, a growth mindset enables individuals to regulate emotions following mistakes and navigate “imposter syndrome” through metacognitive reflection [14, 15, 16, 17]. However, the development of this mindset is heavily influenced by the environment. Parental mindsets, perceived family support, and socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in shaping a child’s perception of their own potential [3, 11, 18, 19, 20]. Despite its benefits, chronic toxic stress can act as a significant barrier, trapping the developing brain in a “survival mode.” In such states, the formation of adaptive schemas is hindered, and core needs like spontaneity and play remain unexpressed.

This article introduces ReAttach as a salutogenic intervention designed to break this cycle. ReAttach serves as a bridge between a child's current, restricted neural pathways and their optimal developmental potential through the NMC procedure. By fostering a "Loving Observer" identification, the intervention promotes secure attachment and facilitates the cognitive restructuring necessary to move from survival to growth. By providing cumulative Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) during sessions, ReAttach nurtures the resilience needed to sustain a lasting Growth Mindset [1, 21].

## Co-regulation, M.I.S.T., and the Emotional Symptom Regulation Model (ESRM)

When working with children, ReAttach Affect Coaches must address Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS), deeply ingrained, self-defeating patterns of thinking and feeling that develop

during childhood [21, 22]. Central to this process is ReAttach Mapping the Individual State of Mind (M.I.S.T.), which allows the therapist to tailor sessions and map family co-regulation [23, 24]. Within the Emotional Symptom Regulation Model (ESRM), these schemas act as "filters" that keep the child in specific autonomic states, often making adaptive traits like self-worth feel "ego-dystonic" or alien [23, 25]. For a ReAttach Affect Coach, it helps to view these schemas as a child's "internal survival manual" that has become outdated. For instance, a child with an "Abandonment" schema isn't just being "clingy"; their autonomic system is stuck in a state of hyper-vigilance [25, 26]. The goal of co-regulation is to move the child from these survival states toward a state of social safety. By using the M.I.S.T. and ESRM to identify the specific emotional phenotype, the ReAttach Affect Coach can introduce ego-dystonic information (positive traits) only when the nervous system is primed to accept it as a reward [23, 25].

Table 1 provides an oversight of phenotypes, autonomic states and maladaptive schemas.

ESRM Phenotype	Autonomic State	Common Maladaptive Schemas [21, 22]
The Avoider	Freeze/Dorsal Vagal	Defectiveness, Social Isolation
The Overwhelmed	High Arousal/Anxiety	Vulnerability to Harm, Failure
The Perfectionist	Sympathetic (Fight)	Unrelenting Standards, Hyper-criticalness
The Dependent	Low Arousal/Collapse	Dependence/Incompetence, Subjugation
The Resenter	Sympathetic (Flight/Fight)	Entitlement, Insufficient Self-Control
The Protector	Mixed State (Guard)	Mistrust/Abuse, Emotional Inhibition
The Searcher	High Vigilance	Approval-Seeking, Self-Sacrifice

**Table 1:** Oversight of phenotypes, autonomic states and maladaptive schemas

ReAttach Affect Coaches can use the following examples to formulate adaptive, ego-dystonic identifications:

The Avoider/Protector: visible, heard, seen, acceptance, presence, belonging, acknowledged. *"You are seen and accepted"*

The Overwhelmed: safety, competence, resilience, protection, stability, mastery, calm. *"You are capable and safe"*

The Perfectionist: worthiness, satisfaction, authenticity, self-compassion, adequacy, wholeness, ease. *"You are enough as you are"*

The Dependent: autonomy, independence, self-reliance, empowerment, initiative, capability, resolve. *"You have your own inner strength"*

The Resenter: connection, collaboration, empathy, fairness, flexibility, understanding, harmony. *"You find peace in cooperation"*

The Protector: openness, trust, intimacy, softness, emotionality, courage, sincerity. *"It is safe to be vulnerable"*

The Searcher: self-care, boundaries, deservingness, priority,

balance, voice, self-respect. *"Your needs matter too"*

Technical Advice for Self-Regulation Tools

If a child is in a low-arousal "collapsed" state, the ReAttach Affect Coach can use play to increase arousal and social engagement [23]. For intrusive trauma-related "noise," the Forgive and Forget Hood provides a sensory "blank canvas," allowing focus on the "Loving Observer" [1]. Crucially, the W.A.R.A. (Wiring Affect with ReAttach) assessment monitors the real-time integration of affect and autonomic regulation, ensuring the child stays in the "window of tolerance" for New Mind Creation [1, 23]. Therefore, we start with the W.A.R.A. during the New Mind Creation Protocol. The New Mind Creation helps the amygdala code positive, previously dystonic concepts as social rewards, rewriting the fixed mindset of the survival manual into one of growth [23].

## Findings and Discussion

The findings of the current study suggest that while a Growth Mindset supports academic success, emotional resilience, and reduced internalizing symptoms, chronic toxic stress can trap

children in survival-based autonomic states that hinder adaptive schema formation and the expression of spontaneity and play. Practice-based evidence indicates that ReAttach, particularly through the NMC procedure, may reduce internalizing and externalizing symptoms by using co-regulation, Positive Childhood Experiences, and tailored mapping of the child's emotional state to introduce adaptive, growth-oriented identifications.

The discussion of the study likewise highlights that mindset development is not purely cognitive but neurobiological and relational, requiring autonomic safety and secure attachment to enable cognitive restructuring. Overall, NMC appears to bridge survival-based neural patterns and growth-oriented development, though further controlled and longitudinal research is needed to confirm its long-term efficacy and mechanisms.

## Declaration of interest

Paula Zeestraten-Bartholomeus is the developer of ReAttach, the W.A.R.A. and Forgive and Forget Hood.

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