Theory of psychological adaptive modes:

Tara Bennett-Goleman: “[*Mind Whispering: A New Map to Freedom from Self-Defeating Emotional Habits*](http://www.tarabennettgoleman.com/).”

I know of a woman who at work seems emotionally reactive, needy and dependent – everyone says “That’s just her [personality](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/personality).”

**All of us are different people in different situations, or with varied groups, or from time to time, and at various stages of our lives. The old personality model, that we have fixed traits that stay with us throughout our lives, doesn’t do justice to how flexible our behavior can be.**

**Today brain science tells us our brains are “plastic” – they can change with the right development experience – and they are far more elastic than the trait idea gives credit to.**

‘Modes’ are a new concept that lets us understand how and why we actually are diverse people at various times. A mode orchestrates our entire way of being: how we perceive and interpret the world, how we react – our thoughts, feelings, actions and interactions.

For example, there’s the avoidant mode, where we try to distance ourselves from feelings and people; the anxious mode, where we over-worry our [relationships](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/relationships) – and the secure mode, where we can take in emotions with calm, feel secure in ourselves and are able to take smart risks, and can focus in ways that help us be at our best.

One liberating effect of thinking in terms of “modes” rather than “personality types” is that modes imply we have choices. We can learn what triggers our modes, what makes some self-defeating ones so sticky, and what can help us loosen their grip and get into better modes. And, ideally, we can release the grip of our self-defeating modes and enter those for wellbeing no matter where we are or whom we are with.

**Seeing someone else – or ourselves – through the lens of a label like “depressed” or “**[**introvert**](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-brain-and-emotional-intelligence/201109/are-you-too-shy-lead)**” can have a subtle negative impact, suggesting a permanence that modes belie. The mode idea builds around what we can do to release the grip of our dysfunctional emotional habits and build a wider set of options for living.**

MODES:

**1. Vulnerable Child: feels lonely, isolated, sad, misunderstood, unsupported, defective, deprived, overwhelmed, incompetent, doubts self, needy, helpless, hopeless, frightened, anxious, worried, victimized, worthless, unloved, unlovable, lost, directionless, fragile, weak, defeated, oppressed, powerless, left out, excluded, pessimistic**

**2. Angry Child : feels intensely angry, enraged, infuriated, frustrated, impatient because the core emotional (or physical) needs of the vulnerable child are not being met**

**3. Impulsive/Undisciplined Child : acts on non-core desires or impulses in a selfish or uncontrolled manner to get his or her own way and often has difficulty delaying short-term gratification; often feels intensely angry, enraged, infuriated, frustrated, impatient when these non-core desires or impulses cannot be met.; may appear “spoiled”**

**4. Contented Child : feels loved, contented, connected, satisfied, fulfilled, protected, accepted, praised, worthwhile, nurtured, guided, understood, validated, self-confident, competent, appropriately autonomous or self-reliant, safe, resilient, strong, in control, adaptable, included, optimistic, spontaneous**

**MALADAPTIVE COPING MODES**

**5. Compliant Surrenderer : acts in a passive, subservient, submissive, approval-seeking, or self-deprecating way around others out of fear of conflict or rejection; tolerates abuse and/or bad treatment; does not express healthy needs or desires to others; selects people or engages in other behavior that directly maintains the self-defeating schema-driven pattern**

**6. Detached Protector : cuts off needs and feelings; detaches emotionally from people and rejects their help; feels withdrawn, spacey, distracted, disconnected, depersonalized, empty or bored; pursues distracting, self-soothing, or self-stimulating activities in a compulsive way or to excess; may adopt a cynical, aloof or pessimistic stance to avoid investing in people or activities**

**7. Overcompensator : feels and behaves in an inordinately grandiose, aggressive, dominant, competitive, arrogant, haughty, condescending, devaluing, overcontrolled, controlling, rebellious, manipulative, exploitative, attention-seeking, or status-seeking way. These feelings or behaviors must originally have developed to compensate for or gratify unmet core needs**

**MALADAPTIVE PARENT MODES**

**8. Punitive Parent : feels that oneself or others deserves punishment or blame and often acts on these feelings by being blaming, punishing, or abusive towards self (e.g., self-mutilation) or others. This mode refers to the style with which rules are enforced rather than the nature of the rules.**

**9. Demanding or Critical Parent : feels that the “right” way to be is to be perfect or achieve at a very high level, to keep everything in order, to strive for high status, to be humble, to puts others needs before one's own or to be efficient or avoid wasting time; or the person feels that it is wrong to express feelings or to act spontaneously. This mode refer to the nature of the internalized high standards and strict rules, rather than the style with which these rules are**

**enforced; these rules are not compensatory in their function.**

**HEALTHY ADULT MODE**

**10. Healthy Adult : nurtures, validates and affirms the vulnerable child mode; sets limits for the angry and impulsive child modes; promotes and supports the healthy child mode; combats and eventually replaces the maladaptive coping modes; neutralizes or moderates the maladaptive parent modes. This mode also performs appropriate adult functions such as working, parenting, taking responsibility, and committing; pursues pleasurable adult activities such as sex; intellectual, esthetic, and cultural interests; health maintenance; and athletic activities.**