

Child Modes

Everyone feels or acts like a child sometimes. However, most of us manage to control our childlike behavior in situations in which it would be inappropriate. Child Modes are a way of perceiving the world and other people that resembles the perception of children. Children have difficulty appreciating or adopting other people's perspective when experiencing strong emotions. An adult in a Child Mode has very similar feelings. Further, when you are in a Child Mode your reactions towards others can resemble the behavior of a child. Like a child, you may find it hard to control your impulses: you may start crying in a conversation with your boss, or you may slam the door in a fight with your partner.

Child Modes are active when we experience strong emotions that are not sufficiently explained by the current situation. When we are in a Child Mode feelings of sadness, anger, shame, or loneliness are exaggerated; it can be very difficult to calm down.

Child Modes are typically triggered when we feel rejected, left alone, or put under pressure. In such situations, the fulfillment of basic human needs like closeness, safety, or autonomy seems to

Box 2.1: Basic Emotional Needs

Basic emotional needs are important for all human beings. However, they can differ in their intensity. In schema therapy we assume five categories of basic emotional needs (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2006)

1. Attachment and safety: You need to feel close to others. The need for attachment comprises safety, stability, attention, love, and acceptance by others.
2. Independence, competence, and identity: You need to have an idea of what makes you the person you are and what you are good at.
3. Freedom to express your important needs and feelings.
4. Spontaneity, fun, and playing.
5. Realistic boundaries: It is especially important for children to know their limits and to accept reasonable boundaries set by others.

People with psychological problems often find it difficult to get these emotional needs met.

be threatened (Box 2.1), even though this may objectively not be the case. Maybe your friend cancelled a date for the movies you had been looking forward to. If you react with a Child Mode, you may feel very disappointed, unloved, abandoned, or angry. From a more adult perspective you may be able to understand your friend's reasons for cancelling the date and you know that she usually cares a lot about you. Nevertheless, you are overwhelmed with strong feelings, start to cry, or retreat to your bed.

People suffering from emotional problems usually experience Child Modes particularly intensely. Small triggers can evoke strong negative feelings, even if the incident is trivial from a more objective perspective. Think of a colleague who did not compliment your new haircut. Most likely your colleague just did not notice or did

not care because he was busy. If you have a strong Vulnerable Child Mode, you may feel alone and unloved. In this chapter we will explain why Child Modes show up so easily in some people.

Three types of Child Mode. The schema therapy model proposes three different types of Child Mode. The *Vulnerable Child Mode* is associated with depressed or anxious feelings such as shame, loneliness, anxiety, sadness, or threat. The second type is the so-called *Angry or Impulsive Child Mode*. In this Mode one usually feels rage, anger, impulsivity, or defiance. Impulsive behaviors appear when someone acts out of the moment without considering the possible negative consequences of his or her action. As an example, a man who was criticized by his boss feels angry and hurt: an impulsive reaction would be risky driving on the way home. The third type of child Mode is the *Happy Child Mode*. We regard this as a healthy Mode: one feels curious and playful, and takes easygoing pleasure in games and activities.

If one or more of these Modes sound familiar to you, it might be helpful for you to come up with your own name for it, such as "small Lisa" for the Vulnerable Child Mode or "pigheaded Tom" for the Angry Child Mode. That will help you to make contact with your child Mode when it comes up.

Everybody experiences feelings of sadness and rage from time to time. How can you decide if a child Mode is active and not just "normal" feelings?

Obviously, everyone knows the feelings related to child Modes very well. The significant difference between "normal feelings" and Child Modes is that child Modes are activated by very small incidents. The intensity of negative emotions seems disproportionate to the event. Moreover, it is really hard for a person in a child Mode to control those feelings and the related reactions.



Figure 2.1 Child Modes

Table 2.1 Naming Child Modes

<i>Vulnerable Child Mode</i>	<i>Angry or Impulsive Child Mode</i>	<i>Happy Child Mode</i>
Your own name for this Mode:	Your own name for this Mode:	Your own name for this Mode:
Related feelings:	Related feelings:	Related feelings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Sadness • Loneliness • Despair • Helplessness • Shame • Abandonment • Dependence • Abused • Humiliated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritated • Rage • Anger • Impulsivity • Defiance • Stubbornness • Lack of discipline • Spoilt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playfulness • Easiness • Curiosity • Fun • Lightheartedness • Safety • Confident

2.1 Vulnerable Child Modes

Vulnerable child Modes go along with all types of sad or anxious emotions. Most people can easily name the feeling which troubles them most; the experience of mixed feelings is also very

common. The following examples will give you hints about what to focus on when you wish to get in contact with your own Vulnerable Child Mode. They might also help you understand which situations Vulnerable Child Modes usually appear in. Please keep in mind that the following examples do not aspire to completeness. Your child Mode may be associated with different feelings.

Abandonment or instability. If you suffer from strong feelings of abandonment, you will often have a sense of being abandoned by others or you fear that you will soon be abandoned. Even in the company of close friends or family members you may happen to experience feelings of loneliness. People with strong feelings of loneliness or abandonment often experienced some kind of desertion in their childhood or youth. Maybe a parent left the family, an important attachment figure died, or they had to live in a succession of foster families that rejected them over and over again.

Case Example “Abandonment”

Sophia is a 34-year-old middle school teacher. She suffers from anxiety attacks and feelings of dissociation and alienation from her body. These problems occur when she has to return to her own apartment after having spent time with her family at the place where she grew up. She feels lonely and abandoned in such situations, even though she has friends in the place where she lives. She tells her therapist that she does not feel close to other people and that all her relationships seem to her to be superficial. When discussing these issues she suddenly feels very sad and gets the feeling that no one will ever stay with her. The therapist suggests that this could be related to Sophia’s repeated loss of a mother figure: her birth mother died when she was 2 years old, and her beloved stepmother died unexpectedly from a cerebral hemorrhage when Sophia was 16.

Social isolation. Some people lack the feeling of belonging to others. They feel isolated, as if they were cut off from the rest of the world. The origin of this feeling is very often an experience of being excluded, for example, by frequent moving or by membership in an unusual, restrictive religious community. Early exclusion from the family or the group of siblings can be traumatic as well. In adult life, seemingly unimportant social signals, such as the order of seating at a dinner party, can trigger the Mode of the excluded child.

Case Example “Isolation”

Megan moved a lot with her family when she was a child. She had always been the “new girl,” didn’t belong to her changing peer groups, and felt excluded. Today she attends university and has found some good friends. But when her fellow students make plans without explicitly including her, she readily feels excluded even when that is objectively not the case.

Mistrust and abuse. Mistrust goes along with a feeling of constant threat. You are always alert to signs of threat and have a suspicious attitude towards other people. People suffering from severe feelings of mistrust are always on their guard, sensing a need to avoid harm by other people. As with the emotions described above, the origin of mistrust most often lies in problematic childhood experiences. A woman who has been sexually abused as a child may become panicky merely from the sound of keys in the door. As another example, think of someone who was bullied on his way to school. As an adult this person cannot stand it if someone walks closely behind him.

Defectiveness and shame. Shame is another possible dominant feeling of a Vulnerable Child Mode. Often feelings of being deficient, bad, inferior, or unwanted are linked. You feel as if you

Case Example “Mistrust and abuse”

Astrid is very frightened of the dark. She always sleeps with the light on. When her husband is not at home she usually stays at a friend’s place overnight. As soon as she notices an unfamiliar noise outside, her body stiffens and she gets panicky. Every shadow on the street makes her feel anxious and helpless. As a child she suffered from the violent temper of her father. He used to hit her and her brothers and sisters randomly if something upset him. Her mother couldn’t protect her as the father also beat her.

are not worth the love, attention, and respect of others. Instead you may feel horribly ashamed of the way you are. People with these feelings have frequently been the victims of devaluing comments or humiliating treatment in their childhood or adolescence.

Case Example “Defectiveness and Shame”

Daniel’s teacher in high school had a few favorite students. Daniel was not one of them. He was very insecure during puberty because he had grown very fast and often felt awkward and behaved clumsily. This teacher repeatedly exposed him to ridicule when he stumbled or behaved awkwardly in any other way. The ensuing laughter of his classmates was extremely humiliating for Daniel. Twenty years later he is a successful IT counselor. On one occasion he accidentally stumbled over the flip chart in a meeting and his colleagues started laughing. Immediately Daniel felt rising feelings of shame and helplessness and escaped to the toilet where it took him several minutes to calm down.

Emotional deprivation. People suffering from emotional deprivation usually feel that their childhood was “on the whole, all right.” But somehow they still did not get the feeling of really being cared for and loved. They lack security, closeness, and attachment. As adults they do not necessarily report constant emotional distress. They do not really miss anything. Still they feel like they don’t matter for other people, and this is a painful experience.

Case Example “Emotional Deprivation”

Steven is a 38-year-old sales marketer who likes his job and fulfills it to his bosses’ satisfaction. His marriage is happy and he also has some friends. Still he can’t get rid of the feeling of never being close to others and loved by them. He tries really hard to get proof of affection from others, both in his job and in his private life. Although there are plenty of people who do like him and let him know it, he can hardly ever feel their affection. Steven says that his childhood was “all right.” His parents were always very busy and often absent. He often felt that it was too much for his parents to take care of their children on top of everything else.

Dependency or incompetence. When you feel unable to do anything independently and do not dare to decide things by yourself, you behave like a dependent child. For children it is normal to depend on parents for important decisions, such as the choice of their school. But if your parents did not stimulate you to make your own choices, even if at times they had different preferences than you did, you may remain dependent on other people. You may not even know what your preferences are. In adult life you still think that your parents or your partner are responsible for your life.

Case Example “Dependency and Incompetence”

Marjorie lived with her parents till the age of 24, when she married Bob. He has a full-time job and she does the housekeeping. She always worked in her parents’ shop, and she doesn’t dare to look for another job. She lives near her parents and visits them every day. She asks her parents or Bob for advice about everything. She asks her mother what she should eat, how to decorate her house, and even how to dress. All the other decisions she leaves to Bob.

2.1.1 *Get in contact with your own Vulnerable Child Mode*

By reading the case examples you might already have got an idea of what a Vulnerable Child Mode can feel like. The following points will help you to check whether you have a Vulnerable Child Mode as well. If you agree quite strongly with one of the statements, this might be the first clue. If you agree only weakly, you probably know these feelings but they don’t cause you serious distress.

- I often feel completely alone.
- I feel weak and helpless.
- I have the feeling that no one loves me.

Do you agree with one or more of these statements? If you often feel sad, abandoned, or anxious without a particular reason it’s probably because of a Vulnerable Child Mode. Very often there is a link between this Mode and your personal history.

If you want to get to know your Vulnerable Child Mode more closely, the following questions may be helpful. You can also use Worksheet 2, “My Vulnerable Child Mode”:

- What are common triggers for my Vulnerable Child Mode? Which situations does it appear in?
- What feelings do I experience in this Mode?
- What thoughts typically come up when I am in this Mode?
- What memories or mental images are associated with my Vulnerable Child Mode?
- How does my body feel in this Mode?
- How I do I typically act in this Mode? How do I treat other people?

If you try to be aware of your Vulnerable Child Mode in your everyday life, you will soon understand it much better. You'll learn what makes it turn up over and over again. You may use Worksheet 1, your "Mode overview worksheet" to fill in these points.

Worksheet 1: My Mode Overview	
<input type="radio"/>	My Mode Overview
<input type="radio"/>	My Child Mode(s)
<input type="radio"/>	My Parent Mode(s)
<input type="radio"/>	My Coping Mode(s)
<input type="radio"/>	My Healthy Adult Mode

Worksheet 2: My Vulnerable Child Mode

My Vulnerable Child Mode	
<input type="radio"/>	My name for this Mode (e.g. Little Lisa):
<input type="radio"/>	1. How can I realize that my Vulnerable Child Mode is present?
<input type="radio"/>	What is triggering my vulnerable child Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	What feelings do I usually have in this Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	What thoughts tend to come up in this Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	What memories are associated/get triggered?
<input type="radio"/>	How does my body feel in this Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	How do I usually behave in this Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	2. Do I tend to switch Modes (e.g. to Angry Child Mode or to a Coping Mode) when I am in the Vulnerable Child Mode? To which one?
<input type="radio"/>	3. What are my actual needs when I am in the Vulnerable Child Mode?
<input type="radio"/>	4. Are my needs met by my behavior (e.g. need for closeness)?

2.1.2 Detecting Vulnerable Child Modes in others

When you sense that somebody feels very easily frightened, threatened, unstable, or is close to tears, this hints at a vulnerable Child Mode in that person. Another sign can be a constant urge for reassurance, for example, “Are you *really* sure that you want me to join you and your friends tonight?” Another clear indicator for a Vulnerable Child Mode is black and white thinking, where the world is split into two parts – good and bad. For example, your friend is convinced that you are completely on her partner’s side in a conflict after you made a small critical remark on her behavior.

Do you remember any situation in which one of your friends, family members, or colleagues seemed to be in a Vulnerable Child Mode? Do you understand what made him or her switch into that Mode? How did he or she behave in the Vulnerable Child Mode? Do you have a clue on the person’s needs in that situation? How did you feel yourself towards that person, and how did you react?

Maybe you felt compassionate and were able to show it. It is also possible that you felt overstrained, helpless, or irritated because arguments and consolidation didn’t seem to help. If you remember your own feelings or reactions towards this person, it makes it easier for you to understand how other people feel when you are in your Vulnerable Child Mode.

2.2 Angry and Impulsive Child Modes

The so-called Angry or Impulsive Child Modes resemble the Vulnerable Child Mode in that they, too, do not make you feel adult. They are often triggered when you feel that your needs are not respected. However, unlike the Vulnerable Child Mode, they are related to the so-called “hot” feelings, like anger and rage. Your behavior in this Mode might be angry or enraged but also defiant or undisciplined. Spoilt behavior is also possible in this Mode.

What is the common ground of these feelings and actions? Most importantly they all express needs in an exaggerated or

inappropriate way. Either the reaction is extremely emotional, with excessive anger or rage, or it is inappropriately spoilt, defiant, or impulsive. It is important to understand that the underlying needs are legitimate; it is absolutely normal to get angry when your needs are not met! However, the behavior associated with this Mode is often inappropriate. For convenience and clarity we will from now on use the term “Angry Child Mode” to encompass *all* the feelings discussed above. Later on you will learn more about the different shades of this Mode.

Very frequently the Angry Child Mode goes along with the Vulnerable Child Mode which you got to know in the previous section. Maybe you get very angry when a friend cancels your date for the movies. Afterwards, feelings of sadness, loneliness, or abandonment might crop up. In this case an Angry Child Mode is triggered and followed by a Vulnerable Child Mode. It can also be the other way around. You may feel lonely and abandoned at first and then get worked up into anger or rage. Many people experience mixed feelings when they face the other person. Imagine that you want to confront your friend with your anger, but as you start talking, you also start crying. Here, Angry and Vulnerable Child Modes are both present at the same moment.

In the group of Angry Child Modes a lot of different feelings can play a role. It is important to understand the dominant angry child feeling. Is it “blind rage” or do you rather feel defiant or pig-headed? Are you angry because you feel you’re being treated unfairly? Or are you too spoilt to accept limits that are actually valid for everybody? The following list depicts emotions people experience in Angry Child Modes. Of course it is also possible to experience a mix of these emotions.

Anger. When anger is dominant you experience intense annoyance or strong frustration when emotional needs (e.g., for acceptance or attention) are not met. This anger might come out in a very strong way, for example, as hurtful claims or sharp criticism. You may tend to “swallow” your anger. However, others may still sense it, even if it doesn’t come out so strongly.

Case Example “Angry Child Mode”

Matthew, a 41-year-old software engineer, tries hard to do everything right for everybody. He is determined always to give a good impression. At the same time he feels easily hurt, rejected, and often believes that he’s being treated unfairly. As a child he’d been harshly criticized and had rarely experienced love and attention. This is probably why criticism is his “sore spot.” When he thinks he’s being criticized he becomes very angry. He reacts with sarcastic answers or offending e-mails, even if someone merely tried to help him with a suggestion.

Rage. When rage is dominant, your feelings in this Mode are very intense. In an Enraged Child Mode you may get completely out of control. You may destroy things or even hurt other people. The enraged child is out of control, hits everything in its way, screams, and defends itself furiously against (assumed) attacks. Anger and rage are very similar feelings. You can distinguish between them by their emotional intensity. Rage is more intense and harder to control than anger.

Case Example “Enraged Child Mode”

Florence works the night shift as a nurse to earn a living for herself and her three kids. She feels constantly overstrained by her work and the responsibility for her family. Often she is completely exhausted and frustrated when she returns home from work. When she sees her children’s jackets and school bags thrown carelessly onto the floor, she feels rage rising. She then slams the door and swears loudly. Her husband often says that she is overreacting and asks her to

be more relaxed but that does not help her. The next small lapse brings on her rage again.

In her childhood, Florence was often alone because her mother was at work; her father was a severe alcoholic who did not take care of anything. He often had extremely scary outbursts of rage. Florence was a bright child who soon learned to be very independent – but ever since her childhood she has felt rage from “always having it hard.”

Defiance. When being defiant you feel angry but you don’t express it directly. However, other people usually get a clear sense of your anger because you are in a defiant retreat or you’re behaving in a passive-aggressive way. People who experienced their autonomy not being respected as children often develop a defiant Angry Child Mode (“of course they don’t ask me”). The dominant emotion of a Defiant Child Mode is often a feeling of injustice.

Impulsivity. You act impulsively when you go for your (short-term) needs without considering negative consequences for yourself or other people. Typical examples are spending more money than you can afford on unnecessary things, overuse of drugs or alcohol, unprotected sex, or eating attacks. The common feature of these behaviors is that current desires are fulfilled no matter what. An observer would probably consider the behavior inappropriate or unnecessary. Very often, the person with the Impulsive Child Mode would agree later on and regret their impulsive behavior. However, when the Impulsive Child Mode is activated, the desire is dominant.

Case Example “Impulsive Child Mode”

Susie is 21 years old and recently moved to another city to start her studies. She enjoys student life a lot, goes out every night, drinks a lot and often ends up having sex with new

acquaintances. When she is sober she is often shocked by her own behavior because she sometimes does not even use protection, risking pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. But when the next party is on, she doesn't want to worry and the same things happen again. After some time, Susie gets into increasing trouble as she rarely attends her course and spends way more money than she can afford.

Susie grew up in a rather chaotic family. Her parents held the view that the kids should be allowed to try anything and did not set any limits for her. Moreover, because her parents were often absent, Susie was partly raised by her older sister, who had a similar lifestyle.

Pamperedness. Being impulsive and being spoilt are overlapping patterns. However, while people with an Impulsive Child Mode are usually critical about their impulsive behaviors in the long term, people with a Spoilt Child Mode find it normal and perfectly acceptable that they don't have to bear the same responsibilities as others. Very often, they have been spoilt in their childhood, too. Most likely they feel offended when others do not tolerate their demands and set them limits, though Spoilt Child Mode often does not go along with strong emotions.

Case Example "Spoilt Child Mode"

Ethan is in a loving relationship with his girlfriend Lucy. Lucy is very understanding and supports Ethan in pursuing his own interests. In return she expects him to do his share of the housekeeping work. Nevertheless, he frequently fails to fulfill his everyday obligations such as shopping in the supermarket. Lucy sometimes gets very annoyed by that. When she tries to confront him he retreats to his computer

and stops talking to her for several hours. Ethan reacts defiantly in those situations and Lucy cannot talk to him about either the supermarket or his defiant behavior.

When Lucy gets to know Ethan's mother she starts understanding the origins of this behavior. His mother has been pampering him since infancy and still fulfills all his wishes. In return she does not expect him either to take on any responsibilities or take care of other people's needs. On the other hand, she interferes in personal affairs without being asked. Now Lucy can see how Ethan developed his defiant and spoilt attitude.

Lack of discipline. People with an Undisciplined Child Mode are hardly able to complete boring or annoying duties, it is very hard for them to take on normal, everyday responsibilities. Issues are neglected which are highly important to the pursuit of certain life goals. People with a lack of discipline are not always spoilt in the sense that they think that others will do their job for them, although that may happen, too. But often they simply live with important jobs not being done. They never learned to stand the frustration that goes along with boring duties. In the worst cases, such a Mode can cause chronic, severe problems. Sometimes people use the term "**procrastination**" to describe these phenomena.

Case Example "Undisciplined Child Mode"

For Ethan (see also case example "Spoilt Child Mode") it is very hard to complete boring assignments that are important for his studies in law. He has difficulty studying regularly and completing his thesis. Even when he starts

working on his thesis, he usually ends up playing video games, surfing the Internet, or watching television. Lucy often thinks that it was not to Ethan's advantage that he was a "bright kid" in school because he missed the opportunity to get used to being disciplined, completing boring assignments, and taking responsibility.

2.2.1 *Get in contact with your own Angry or Impulsive Child Mode*

Of course, not every angry or impulsive action should be considered as part of a highly dysfunctional Mode. Anger is a normal feeling indicating a violation of your rights or limits, and everyone gets angry now and then. It is even a problem if you cannot feel anger. There are a lot of reasons for justified anger; also, most people delay annoying duties as long as possible. And, of course, most people are more likely to react with irritation when they are hungry or tired. Such reactions are not an Angry Child Mode.

We call a pattern an Angry Child Mode when somebody reacts frequently in one or more of the ways associated with the Mode, and when this pattern causes serious problems in his or her life. This would be the case if the Angry Child Mode puts the job or relationship in danger because other people feel offended or threatened.

The following statements can help you determine whether this applies to you. Please take into account that questionnaires only can give a hint. Your personal appraisal counts most!

- When I get angry I cannot control myself and lose containment.
- I do what I want no matter how other people feel or think about it.
- I break rules and regret it afterwards.
- I think that normal rules don't apply to me.

Section 2.1 (Vulnerable Child Mode) was all about feeling sad, weak, lonely, or inferior. Experiencing the feelings of the

Vulnerable Child Mode can be very painful. In contrast, if you are in Angry or Impulsive Child Mode you often feel strong and powerful. It can be a great feeling to put others in their place. But then you might feel ashamed afterwards, or an outburst of anger can be followed by feelings of sadness and abandonment.

Particularly in Spoilt and Impulsive Child Modes, feelings are often not very intense. In these Modes it's all about granting yourself what you want (or do not want to do...). Just as children may feel great when behaving in a spoilt way, people usually feel quite good in this Mode. However, these Child Modes cause long-term problems, such as financial debt, relationship problems, and bad grades in school (see also Box 2.2 "Problematic Behaviors").

Box 2.2: Problematic Behaviors

Psychologists talk about "problem behaviors" if a certain behavior is comfortable or pleasant in the short term but causes problems in the long term. Conversely, "healthy" behaviors are often unpleasant or boring in the short term and pay off in the long run.

Here are some examples of problem behaviors:

- **Smoking:** In the short term you enjoy it, in the long run it might cause sickness or death. The opposed healthy behavior "quit smoking" is extremely difficult in the short run, but saves your long-term health.
- **Eating too much:** In the short term it is pleasant and enjoyable, but causes long term overweight and health problems. The alternate behavior "eat reasonably and exercise" is difficult to hang on to in the moment but pays in the long run.
- **Impulsive, Spoilt, and Undisciplined Child Modes** often include typical problematic behaviors. They feel good in the short term but you can already see the problems on the horizon.

Other people might find your Angry or Impulsive Child Mode more distressing than you do. A hint about that could be someone telling you that your behavior is inappropriate, that you are spoiled, or that your defiance is a pain. If you've heard something like that more than once you should be alarmed – probably there's some truth in it!

Try to think this pattern through for the following “problematic behaviors”: delaying the annual tax declaration; postponing a visit to the dentist. For the Angry and Impulsive Child Modes it is, again, very important to understand how they are triggered, how they make you feel, and where they stem from in your biography. The following questions might be relevant to help you understand your Angry Child Mode better:

- What are typical triggers of your Angry or Impulsive Child Mode? In which situations does it get activated?
- What feelings are dominant in that Mode? Is it more about frustration, anger, rage, or defiance? Do you feel more strong or weak in this Mode?
- Is your Angry Child Mode usually followed by a Vulnerable Child Mode? Or is it the other way round?
- What thoughts are typical of this Mode? If you feel unjustly treated – what is the injustice?
- What memories and mental images are related to this Mode? You may have to dive into your fantasy to find that out.
- How do you typically act in this Mode? How do you react to others and how do others react to you? Does that remind you of something in your childhood?

Worksheet 3, “My Angry/Impulsive Child Mode,” can help you to understand this Mode and its origin in your biography better.

2.2.2 Detecting Angry or Impulsive Child Modes in others

Obviously your first clue of an Angry Child Mode is the display of rage or anger. Only *inappropriate or exaggerated* anger would be considered an expression of an Angry Child Mode. Maybe

Worksheet 3: My Angry / Impulsive Child Mode

My Angry / Impulsive Child Mode

My name for this Mode (e.g. Firebrand):

1. How can I realize that my Angry / Impulsive Child Mode is present?

What is **triggering** my Angry / Impulsive Child Mode?

What **feelings** do I usually have in this Mode?

What **thoughts** tend to come up in this Mode?

What **memories** are associated / get triggered?

How does my **body** feel in this Mode?

How do I usually **behave** in this Mode?

2. Do I tend to switch Modes (e.g. to Vulnerable Child Mode or a Coping Mode) when I am in the Angry Child Mode? To which one?

3. What are my actual **needs** when I am in the Angry Child Mode?

4. Are my needs met by my behavior (e.g. need for respect)?

Worksheet 4: Advantages and Disadvantages of My Angry / Impulsive Child Mode

Advantages and Disadvantages of My Angry / Impulsive Child Mode		
	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Short-term		
Long-term		

you understand that somebody is frustrated, but still feel that his or her reaction is excessive and over the top. Somebody may be in an Angry Child Mode when he or she is extremely upset about small details. Some people cannot calm down their anger and keep talking about the same situation over and over again. Here an Angry Child Mode might be involved, too. Your reaction might be to think, "He really should get over it. There is no use in getting upset all over again." However, when you put this to the person this he or she may criticize you or start crying.

The following patterns indicate Impulsive, Spoilt, Defiant, or Undisciplined Child Modes. Maybe you are faced with someone who consistently takes your support and help for granted. Or you find it intolerable how defiant your partner gets when you want to

talk about a problem in a quiet and sensible way. If you have thoughts like "that is so childish" or "is she really grown up?" it's usually Child Modes in action. If a person is in a Vulnerable Child Mode most people feel compassion for them whereas people in an Angry or Impulsive Child Mode provoke more aversive reactions. People feel annoyed or frustrated because they're trying to behave reasonably and the other person just keeps picking on them. It can be useful to ask yourself the following questions to understand this Mode in other people.

- Do you understand why the Angry Child Mode gets triggered?
- What do you think are the person's genuine needs right now? Very often anger display goes along with feeling excluded or rejected, and the genuine need behind the anger is closeness and social contact.
- How do you react to this Mode? What are your thoughts, feelings, and actions?
- To what extent are the genuine needs of the person expressed by the Angry Child Mode and fulfilled by the reactions of others to this Mode? Does the person succeed in getting his or her needs met?
- With regard to spoilt and impulsive Modes, do you have an idea about the origin of this Mode? Do parents or other important figures in the affected person's life tend to act in a spoilt or impulsive manner as well? Or has the person been pampered as a child?
- With regard to Angry and Enraged Child Modes, where do you think this Mode stems from? Were important parent figures angry or aggressive? Or did the person suffer from bad or unfair treatment in their childhood?

When someone is in an Angry or Impulsive Child Mode, you may also feel angry or frustrated and act accordingly. Another possibility is that you feel powerless or helpless facing their anger or complaints. Of course it is most helpful to discuss these questions directly with the respective person, especially if it is your

partner or a good friend. But only discuss these issues when the person is in the Healthy Adult Mode (see Chapter 5).

2.3 Happy Child Mode

You are a lucky person if you already have a strong Happy Child Mode! This Mode goes along with fun, playfulness, lightheartedness, and curiosity. In the Happy Child Mode we do things that are funny and pleasant, like playing, visiting theme parks, or going to the cinema. You may dress up for carnival or just play a card game with your friends. In the Happy Child Mode we feel attached to other people and experience closeness with them.

A strong Happy Child Mode is protective for your mental health. The Angry and Vulnerable Child Modes are in many ways opposite to the Happy Child Mode, and are often intense in people with emotional problems. People with a strong Vulnerable Child Mode typically have weak Happy Child Modes and vice versa.

We assume that for many of our readers it is an important goal to strengthen and build up their Happy Child Mode. It can replace a vulnerable or Angry Child Mode. Of course, you should always try to keep a good balance. It would not be appropriate always to be in a Happy Child Mode. The Healthy Adult Mode should actually be your “default mode” (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, it is very important to notice when you are feeling the need for fun and recovery from your everyday life. It is important to have a repertoire of activities promoting your Happy Child Mode for those situations. Thus you can balance moments of stress and frustration.

Case Examples “Happy Child Mode”

1. Anne is a hard-working researcher. She and her husband take care of their three kids. Anne has got a very tight time schedule and often works late at night.

Luckily, she has got some activities that bring on her Happy Child Mode easily. She has some close friends whom she meets every Friday night to play bridge. In this circle of friends she can completely let go and they have a lot of fun together. At the weekends she visits theme parks with her children and enjoys the roller coaster. In those situations she does not feel the burden of all her responsibilities. Without her Happy Child Mode Anne might be at risk of developing psychological problems like burnout or depression. If she had a strong Punitive Parent Mode (see Chapter 3), she would not allow herself those fun activities. She would miss the balance and would be at risk of falling into a vicious circle of stress and exhaustion.

2. Michael was educated as a childcare worker but then decided to study the field of education. Additionally, he works with young people in various circus projects in which he learns and teaches acrobatic tricks and vaudeville shows. Michael has made his Happy Child Mode his job and organizes public shows with the help of his friends. He is most fond of street improvisation theatre. Luckily, his wife has a secure job with a fixed income, which balances the financial insecurity that accompanies Michael's job. At some point in the future Michael wants to get a more secure job but for the moment he enjoys life as it is.
3. Emma is a 60-year-old teacher without children of her own. Nevertheless she loves children and has a strong bond to her nieces and nephews as well as the children of her close friends. Children love holidays at Aunt Emma's place. She visits toy stores and takes exciting trips with them. In summer Emma and the children can really get into playing with their new toys and the discoveries they make at their trips to the zoo.

2.3.1 Get in contact with your own Happy Child Mode

It is usually quite easy to identify your Happy Child Mode. You feel light and happy; you have fun and laugh a lot. Overall, you feel that the world is all right. You are connected with others and do not feel envious or jealous. The world and your life are shining in bright and friendly colors. The following statements belong to the Happy Child Mode:

- I feel accepted and loved.
- I am satisfied and relaxed.
- I trust most of the people around me.
- I am spontaneous and playful.

Many people find that their Happy Child Mode does not occur frequently or strongly enough. Because of that it is important to ask yourself the following questions.

- Which actions, situations, and persons trigger your Happy Child Mode?
- When did you last feel your Happy Child Mode? Think about the last week, when did you feel happy and lighthearted?
- What belongs to your Happy Child Mode? What is important? Are there certain people, special activities, or certain situations (like weekends or sunny weather)?
- Is there anything that makes it easier for you to get into your Happy Child Mode? Some people feel more relaxed after exercise, then they can start playful activities more easily.

You can use Worksheet 5, "My Happy Child Mode," to become familiar with your Happy Child Mode. But be aware that life is not perfect! Even if you feel that you never experience happy times, there may be opportunities that bring a little bit of Happy Child Mode into your life. It is all about getting to know your chances in life and then take one step after another. All items of information about your Happy Child Mode should be put in Worksheet 1, "My mode overview."

Worksheet 5: My Happy Child Mode

My Happy Child Mode

My name for this Mode (e.g. Happy Susie):

1. How can I realize that my Happy Child Mode is present?

What is **triggering** my Happy Child Mode?

What **feelings** do I usually have in this Mode?

What **thoughts** tend to come up in this Mode?

What **memories** are associated/get triggered?

How does my **body** feel in this Mode?

How do I usually **behave** in this Mode?

2.3.2 Detecting the Happy Child in others

This is a simple task as well. When you experience others sweeping you away with their good mood and their laughter, they probably have a strong Happy Child Mode. The Vulnerable and Angry Child Modes often scare others off, starting a vicious circle where others easily retreat. With the Happy Child Mode it's the other way around. People with a strong Happy Child Mode spread amusement and relaxation. Others like them and love to be around them. Thus, a virtuous circle is running. Your Happy Child Mode will draw other people to you and make you more popular. This will increase your sense of belonging. You will feel well and stable, which is a great basis for even more Happy Child Mode activation.

Case Example "Happy Child Mode"

Jessica is very successful in cultivating her Happy Child Mode in her life. She works as a management trainer and group therapist and is very good at her job. She also takes a lot of time for family activities like sports, games, and children's theater. She sends out good vibes that immediately attach people around her. She is particularly famous for her open laughter. When Jessica goes out with a group of friends the mood is significantly more fun and relaxed than without her. This leads to many invitations for parties or other social activities. Even her colleagues enjoy co-operation with her and try to enhance it because she always generates a good atmosphere.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter we described three types of Child Modes. The *Vulnerable Child Mode* is associated with depressed or anxious feelings such as shame, loneliness, anxiety, sadness or threat.

When your *Angry or Impulsive Child Mode* is triggered you experience rage, anger, impulsivity, or defiance. The *Happy Child Mode* makes you feel curious and playful, and take easy-going pleasure in games and activities. This Mode is a healthy Child Mode.

Everyone with persistent distressing negative patterns and feelings mixing up their life has at least a Vulnerable Child Mode. Besides that you may have an Angry or Impulsive Child Mode, but that is not always the case. The Happy Child Mode is mostly underdeveloped and rarely present. All information about your Child Modes can be put in Worksheet 1, the Mode Overview Worksheet.

In the next chapters you can discover how your "Dysfunctional (or damaging) Parent Modes" put pressure on you and make you feel unwanted or rejected. Next, you'll be introduced to different ways to deal with these difficult emotional experiences. We call these survival strategies to handle difficult or threatening situations "coping styles."