

Life Script

A life script is an unconscious life plan we develop in childhood which drives our behaviours and determines our life patterns. From our early experiences and the messages we received from our parents and caregivers, we formed our ideas about ourselves, others and the world (our core beliefs) and developed rules for living. A life script functions like an invisible internal rule book or a pre-written screenplay for your life, drafted in early childhood and unconsciously played out into adulthood. The parental messages we received in childhood came in the form of injunctions, counterinjunctions (drivers) and permissions.

Injunctions

Injunctions are unspoken (nonverbal) emotional messages sent from parents to children. For example, a parent may frown at a child who is behaving in a manner they find disagreeable. Conveying messages like: **Don't be important. Don't succeed. Don't feel. Don't belong.** Injunctions strongly shape the life script.

Counter-Injunctions (Drivers)

Counter-injunctions or drivers are verbal rules and expectations sent from parents to children. These create pressure patterns in adulthood. Pressure patterns are predictable stress behaviours that occur when a person operates under a driver. Some examples include:

Be Perfect (I must not make mistakes) creates a pressure pattern of overthinking, fear of criticism, excessive checking, tension in the body (tight jaw, stiff posture) and delayed decision-making.

Be Strong (I must not show feelings) creates a pressure pattern of emotional suppression, detached communication, minimal facial expression, over-responsibility and difficulty asking for help.

Try Hard (Effort matters more than success) creates a pressure pattern of starting many tasks and finishing few, overcomplicating simple things, sighing, straining tone and talking about effort rather than results.

Please Others (I must make everyone happy) creates a pressure pattern of difficulty saying no, over-apologising, smiling even when upset, anxiety about others' approval and neglect of own needs.

Hurry Up (There's not enough time) creates a pressure pattern of impatience, rapid speech, interrupting others, restlessness and anxiety about delays.

Permissions

Permissions are messages that counteract injunctions. They give psychological freedom, encourage healthy autonomy, support growth and self-acceptance. They are sent by parents to children or sent by therapists to clients.

Some examples include: **It's OK to succeed. It's OK to feel. It's OK to think. It's OK to be close. It's OK to be playful. You matter.**

Permissions are positive messages that counteract negative injunctions and allow a person to live more freely and autonomously.

Types of life scripts

Winner Script

Person achieves goals
Feels OK about self and others
Makes autonomous decisions

Non-Winner Script

Average or stuck life pattern
Avoids risk
Lives below potential

Loser Script

Repeated failure or self-sabotage
Confirms negative beliefs
May engage in destructive patterns

Ancestral Scripts

Family generational scripts are unconscious life plans and behavioural patterns passed down through generations influencing how individuals think, feel, and behave, similarly to their ancestors. These scripts were often constructed during periods of hardship and adversity in previous generations to help ancestors survive, but hinder modern personal growth and happiness.

Redecision

Life scripts can change. Scripts are decisions and decisions can be re-decided. Through therapy, awareness and Adult ego-state functioning, people can rewrite their script. The goal is autonomy.

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