

What are beliefs?

By beliefs we do not mean religious beliefs but beliefs that individuals hold about themselves and their world. Beliefs are a sense of certainty about something. In the dictionary they are defined as “a principal accepted as true or real without proof. An opinion or conviction.”

Anthony Robbins says that “the most important opinion a person will ever hold is the one that they hold about themselves.”

Most people never question their beliefs because they see them as set in stone. Because all our thoughts, our behaviour and our actions are a direct result of our beliefs, they can inspire us or they can destroy us. This means that it is vital that we start to question the dogmatic nature of our beliefs. We need to see them as movable and changeable instead of seeing them as an accepted principle.

How are beliefs created?

Beliefs are formed in our childhood and influenced by the significant people around us such as parents, family members, teachers, peer groups, media and religion.

Think back to when you were young. Was there ever a significant event where a teacher told you off for giving a stupid response? How did you respond? Did you stop putting your hand up at all? You may even have told yourself that you were not good enough, or not clever enough, or not fast enough... and this inner self-talk became a belief you applied to any situation.

Perhaps next time, you didn't even try, because there was no point anyway. If you were told as a child that you are clumsy, you will remember the world 'clumsy' every single time you drop something. Clumsiness becomes a focus and thereby a self-fulfilling prophecy.

On the flipside, there may have been positive, affirming beliefs and attitudes that teachers or parents might have taught you; beliefs that formed the foundation of strong positive self-beliefs that created successful outcomes for you in your life.

Adult behaviour based on childish thoughts

Have you ever met someone who prefaced all his or her good ideas with: “This is probably a stupid idea, but...”, or: “I know this sounds dumb but...” As a result, all his or her contributions to team projects are always developed by and credited to colleagues. No one takes them seriously, despite intelligence and hard work.

Now imagine his or her background: the youngest of three children, and all ideas could have been squashed by the two older siblings, who thought that they always knew better. If we are told we are stupid and we are made fun of, we can grow up with the disempowering beliefs that we have nothing significant to contribute to anything or anyone.

According to behavioural therapists and child psychologists, children under the age of five hear ten times as much criticism and negative phrases as they receive praise and encouragement. Most of these negative phrases are there in order to protect the child. However, we know from NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) that the unconscious mind accepts negative phrases at face value, without taking into account the context of possible good intentions. Negativity or 'verbal abuse' as psychologists now call it, is a significant syndrome of children who are perceived as being troubled and have behavioural challenges.

Children in particular, want to be loved. They do anything to get approval and feel accepted. This creates a tendency and pressure to conform, which in turn creates a self-image that is created in response to other's reactions and attitudes. It causes external instead of internal validation.

Think about a baby, it learns by imitating behaviours. It smiles back at you when you smile, and may cry when you frown. It adopts and learns the behaviours around it by reflecting back everything that it receives.

How are beliefs strengthened?

During puberty, most teenagers become very aware of their self-image. During this time, beliefs are strengthened and can form the basis of life-long beliefs unless challenged and consciously changed.

Isn't it interesting that our self-image is an amalgamation of all the attitudes, opinions and beliefs we have imitated, reflected and adopted from everyone around us during childhood? In his book *THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY* (1964), Byrne concludes that our script for life is written by the age of 4 or 5, by the age of 7 it is polished and from the age of 12, we begin to live it out.

Through coaching, we can revisit our script for life and look at how it is serving us. In the coaching sessions we get the opportunity to change aspects of our script to move towards our full potential and power.

The Four-Minute Mile

You may have heard of Roger Bannister's 4-minute mile. Before May 1954, hundreds of runners had unsuccessfully attempted to run a mile in less than four minutes. It was even scientifically and medically proven that this was impossible because the human heart, bone and muscle could not undertake the amount of pressure this would cause.

In May 1954, Roger Bannister broke this theory by running a mile in 3 minutes and 59.4 seconds. How was this possible? What was the turning point? Did the mile suddenly become shorter, and time faster? Of course the answer is no. Roger became conscious of the power of the mind and primed himself through positive self-talk to do it, ignoring, or filtering out all the scientific tests. He imagined it over and over in his mind until he couldn't experience it any other way.

What was fascinating was that others started to match or exceed his performance and in just two months after his achievement 2 more runners broke the barrier and hundreds more had broken it within 12 months. They realised that it was possible and changed their beliefs. (The record has now been lowered by almost 17 seconds!)

Limiting beliefs can be challenged!

Most people are not aware that their beliefs are a choice and that some of their beliefs are holding them back from achieving their desired outcomes.

So what are your beliefs and what would you like them to be?

TASK 1: YOUR GLOBAL BELIEFS

Answer the following questions to get a feeling for what your Global beliefs are:

What is life about?

What is life not about?

What is the purpose of life?

What are relationships?

What is a relationship NOT about?

How do you experience love?

What stresses you in life?

What is effortless?

What is difficult?

What is work? What isn't work?

TASK TWO: YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

Don't think about these sentences too much, write the first thing that comes to mind. Only your spontaneous thoughts are relevant.

I must _____

I must _____

I must _____

I must _____

I must _____

I must _____

What would happen if you didn't?

How much do your beliefs influence the things you believe you can or cannot do?

Complete the following sentences, and write down your immediate and initial thoughts, they are the gems.

I can't _____

I can't _____

I can't _____

I can't _____

I can't _____

I can't _____

What stops you?

TASK 3: YOUR PERSONAL BELIEFS

List as many beliefs about yourself that you can think of below. In the first box, list all the positive qualities you have and everything that you are good at. In the second box, list all the negative beliefs that you hold about yourself and all the things that you believe you are not good at.

Positive beliefs

Negative Beliefs

Review your list of positive beliefs and spend a moment to reflect on some of the events that shaped these beliefs.

What about your negative beliefs? Where did they come from? Who taught you them?

How do you feel about the person or people who you believe taught you those beliefs? Do you respect them? Have they been right every single time? What does their life look like?

What are those negative beliefs costing you on a daily basis? What are you missing out on?

What would your life look like if you didn't let these beliefs go?

What would your life look like if you did?

TASK FOUR: TRYING ON the POSITIVE

As an exercise, turn these negative sentences into positive phrases:

1. *I'm feeling sick* POSITIVE: _____
2. *This is a problem for me* POSITIVE: _____
3. *I always forget* POSITIVE: _____
4. *Things are always going wrong* POSITIVE: _____
5. *I can't do things fast* POSITIVE: _____

TASK 5: REPLACING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

For the next part of the exercise, turn some of your negative beliefs into their opposites.

For example: "I don't have time to study, look for a new job and hold down my current job", might turn it into: "I have all the time I need."

Then look for evidence for this new belief. At first this might not feel 'natural' for you, because you may have held on to these limiting beliefs for many years and they are part of your 'map'. To find the evidence for these new beliefs, you will notice that you are going to ask yourself different questions, such as: "How can I make it work?" as opposed to: "it doesn't work".

Questions to consider when reviewing your limiting beliefs:

"What would you do if you knew that you could not fail?"

"What if you had the resources to do anything, what would you do?"

"What would you do if neither time nor money was an issue?"

"What would you do if you didn't have to live with the consequences?"

These questions will help you to lift the veil and peak into a potential reality that has previously been unavailable to you.

I now believe:

I now believe:

I now believe:

I now believe:

I now believe:

What did you learn as a result of doing these exercises?

For further discussion:

Which limiting beliefs no longer serve you? Have you noticed that most of your beliefs are not based on rationality or facts? Now is the time to challenge them so that you can live the life you were born to live.