

WHAT ARE CORE BELIEFS?

Do you exercise? If you do, you know how much focus is put on developing your physical core. Having a strong, flexible core prevents injuries. Your core is right in the middle of your body. It encompasses all the muscles in the front, back, and sides of your midsection. When you do exercises that strengthen your core muscles, you stabilize your whole body. Your posture is good. You have strength to run and walk. When you don't exercise your core muscles and they are weak, you could have back pain or a protruding waistline.



Your core beliefs also provide a strong structure. Core beliefs are how you see yourself, other people, the world, and the future. Once you identify your core beliefs, you can prevent injuries, such as emotional pain, bad decisions, and not living up to your potential. Like your physical core, your core beliefs need to be strong and flexible. When subconscious, negative core beliefs guide your life, your overall sense of well-being is weak. This can cause unnecessary, emotional and social harm. You may live a dysfunctional life that prevents you from doing small, ordinary things.

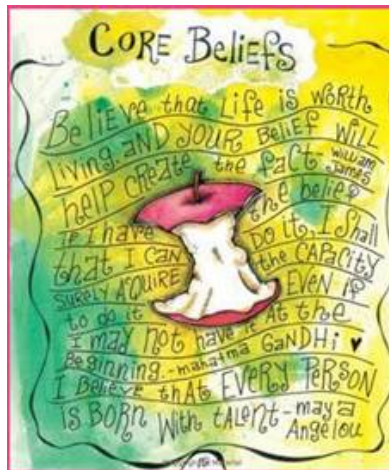


How Core Beliefs Develop

As you were growing up, things happened to you, and you interacted with people in each of those situations. Based on your experiences, you formed impressions about yourself and others. These impressions are your core beliefs. Your childhood, your basic temperament, and your environment combine to form them. Your core beliefs affect the way you live your life and determine the

following: what you believe about yourself, what you believe about others, and what you believe about the world.

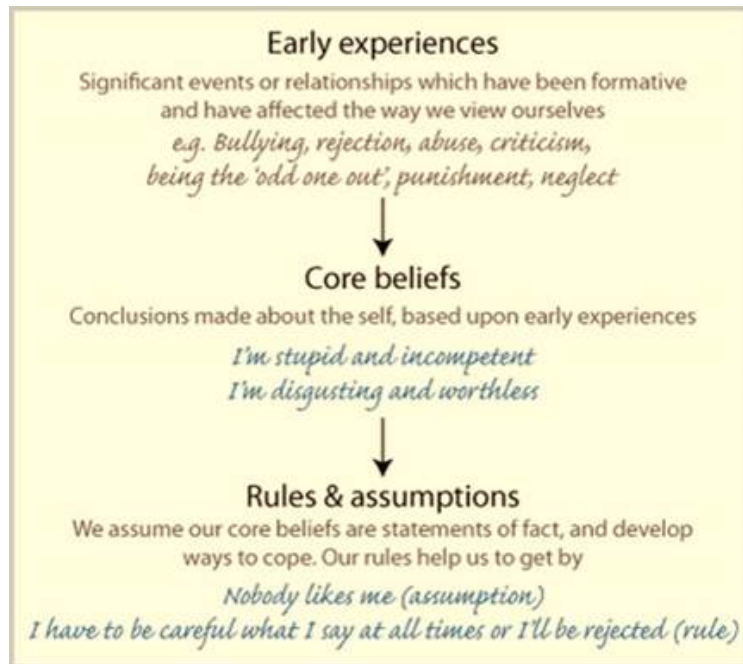
- **What You Believe About Yourself:** As you grew up, you learned a great deal about yourself from the things that your parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, and friends said to you. As you interacted with them, you started to decide who you were. What you thought about yourself then fashioned what you did and how you did it.
- **What You Believe About Others:** As you grew, you learned many things about other people based on your interactions with them and on your observations of their behavior. Are they good? Do they help one another? Do they hurt people? Are they mean? If you grew up in a loving home, you might have learned that it is safe to trust people, to take risks, and to help others. If you did not grow up in a loving home, you might have learned that it is not safe to trust people or that other people may hurt you and abuse you.
- **What You Believe About the World:** What you believe about yourself and about others affects how you see the world. If you come from a caring background, you may believe that the world is a safe place. The future is filled with hope, and there is a chance for peace. If you come from a harsh background and live under constant stress, you may believe that the world is frightening and that you are powerless to bring about change.



Why You Need to Challenge Your Negative Beliefs

If you believe something is true, you try to support it. Every time you confirm what you think is true, the belief gets a little stronger. Eventually, what you believe affects your behavior.

Let's say you believe the following statement: I am not smart. You take a test at school. You fail. For you, this confirms that you are not smart. You begin to have test anxiety and stop doing your homework. You no longer ask questions in class because others will also then know that you are not smart. The reality is that you did not study for the first test. You stopped trying. You stopped asking questions. It did not have anything to do with being smart or not being smart.



We all have negative core beliefs. By identifying and challenging them, you can focus on what is really true. This is a much better way to use your mental energy and time. Life is more successful when you are guided by your positive core beliefs rather than your negative core beliefs.

Negative Core Beliefs

Identify the thoughts, conscious or subconscious, that guide your thinking when you are making decisions. How do you believe that you developed these guiding principles? Are they characteristic of your personality? Are they from childhood experiences? Are they from the environment in which you lived? Why do you think you tell yourself these things? There are four negative core beliefs that are common but not helpful or healthy viewpoints to rely on when you work through the decision-making process.

Negative: I am defective.

In the back of your mind, you may consider yourself flawed, incompetent, or inferior. This makes it difficult to have close relationships because you fear the other person will one day discover that you are defective. Have any of these statements ever come to mind?

I'm not good enough	I'm a failure
I can't get anything right	I don't deserve anything good
I'm stupid	There's something wrong with me
I'm inferior	I do not measure up to others
I'm a bad person	I'm always wrong
I'm unattractive (ugly, fat, etc.)	I'm abnormal

Negative: I am unlovable. I will be abandoned.

You tell yourself that you do not know if you belong. You wonder if you deserve love or if you can be loved. You feel lonely even when you are with people. You choose not to form close relationships because you think, in the end, you will be rejected. This enables you to avoid the pain. You may choose not to voice your own opinion for fear that someone will walk away from you if you do. If this is one of your core beliefs, one or more of these statements may have crossed your mind:

I'm not lovable	I'm alone	People I love will leave me
I'm unacceptable	I don't fit in anywhere	I will be abandoned if I love or care for something/someone
I'm always left out	Nobody loves me	I am uninteresting (and people will leave me because of it)
I don't matter	Nobody wants me	If I assert myself, people will leave me
I'm not wanted	I'm unimportant	I'm not as good as other people

Negative: I am helpless. I am powerless.

If this is your core belief, you do not think you have control over situations. You are not confident that you can handle things well or by yourself. You may micromanage or try to over control certain circumstances. Sometimes, you may give up entirely. These are statements that you may say to yourself if this is one of your core beliefs:

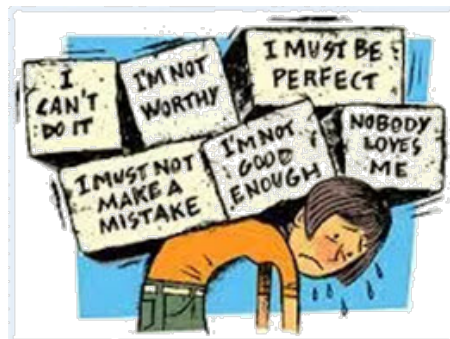
I'm helpless/powerless	I do not measure up to others	I can't do it
I'm out of control	I can't achieve	I'm always number two
I must have control to be okay	I can't change	I finish last
I'm weak	There's no way out	I can't stand up for myself
I'm trapped	Other people will manipulate me and control my life	I'm a loser
I'm needy	If I experience emotions, I will lose control	I can't say 'no'

Negative: I have to fix this. I am responsible (for you).

You give up taking care of yourself to take care of others. You feel guilty when you don't. You think you are responsible for other people's happiness. You apologize too much. This core belief may have resulted because, as a young person, you are or have been responsible for other family members.

I shouldn't spend time taking care of myself	I have to do everything perfectly
When I see that others need help, I have to help them	If I make a mistake, it means I'm careless/a failure/etc.
I'm only worthwhile if I'm helping other people	I've done something wrong
If I express negative feelings in a relationship, terrible things will happen	It's not okay to ask for help
I have to make people happy	I have to do everything myself
It's my fault	If I don't do it, no one will
If I trust people, they may hurt me (and I won't survive)	I'm responsible for everyone and everything
People will betray me	If I care enough, I can fix him/her/this
My needs are not important	I can't trust or rely on another person

Wow! That's a little depressing. Who wants to have those thoughts running through their head? There is good news. Just because you think these negative things now or just because you have thought some of them for a very long time does not mean that you cannot change them. Change is never easy. You have to be very aware of what your mind is telling you when you make decisions. It takes time and practice. However, uncovering these negative beliefs that have caused you to make unsound or unhealthy decisions in the past is the best first step. Once you do that, you are on your way to better decision-making!



Challenging Your Negative Core Beliefs

Look at this chart. It is one way to challenge a negative belief when it comes to mind. Using the voice of truth means writing down the facts - no emotions, no feelings, no opinions, and no assumptions – the facts. Do this just like you would if you were involved in a court case. List what is observable and describable. Stating the obvious can help you see things that may not be true and may need to be changed.

Voice of Truth

Whenever you are having a negative thought about yourself or your life, write it down. Then write down the real truth of the situation. ✨

Negative Thoughts:

Voice of Truth:

Negative Thoughts:

Voice of Truth:

Positive Core Beliefs

Here's the good part. When you remember the times that you have been successful, have worked hard, or have had good relationships, you are telling yourself that you are worth it. When you know that you are worth it, you have hope. This encourages you to keep trying. The more you try and succeed, the easier it is to remove those negative statements from your mind.



People, for one reason or another, sometimes tell us things that are hurtful or treat us in a harmful way. When this happens, the negative core beliefs creep in again. Consciously choosing your core beliefs, instead of listening to what others say to you, can make your life an amazing adventure. These are your core beliefs. They become your rules for living. They tell you what you can do and what you cannot do. They are the self-talk in your head. Talk to yourself well. Choose your core beliefs carefully, and make them stick!

EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE CORE BELIEFS

Positive: My life is an incredible gift.

You count your blessings. You choose to learn and grow, even in difficult circumstances. You persevere. You believe that you can.

Positive: Today is the most important day of all.

You live in the present. You learn from the past and do not dread the future. You are mindful and aware of all that is around you. This allows you to live fully. You give the most of yourself to the people around you and enjoy what you do.

Positive: Everything will be all right.

No matter how bad things are now, they will pass. You can learn and grow through hard times. Opportunities are present in the worst of circumstances.

Positive: I am free to be ME.

You choose to stop comparing yourself to others. You stop living for other people and their opinions. You take steps to identify who you are and choose to be true to yourself.

Positive: The work is worth it.

Life is not easy. There are no shortcuts. Be patient. There is value in the hard work and the time it takes to achieve your goals.

Positive: Being wrong is okay.

Sometimes failing is what reveals the way to the right place. Do not be afraid of being wrong or failing. You learn valuable lessons about yourself and others when things don't work out and you have to re-evaluate what you need to be doing.

Focus on developing your core beliefs. This will keep you strong and flexible. You will live up to your potential. Most importantly, you will be glad you are YOU!

Print the worksheet by clicking on the graphic below. As you complete it, take some time to think about the core beliefs that influence your decisions.

*Identify your Core Beliefs about
Others and The Outside World*



Below are additional educational resources and activities for this unit.

[Unit 5 Advance Organizer](#)

[Unit 5 Scramble](#)

[Unit 5 Scramble Key](#)