



Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are so named because they seem to run deep to the very “core” of our being. They are generally long-held beliefs adopted since childhood based upon our experiences and reinforced throughout our lives. Core beliefs are those strongly held views that we have about ourselves, the world, and about our relationships with others.

Unfortunately, our core beliefs are often exaggerated, distracted, or even erroneous. Our early experiences become emotionally entrenched in the subconscious where they continue to shape and distort our perception of reality. Even though we grow chronologically and intellectually as adults, our subconscious core belief systems remain suspended emotionally in a childlike state. In this state we tend to continue to recognize experiences that reinforce our erroneous beliefs while rejecting or minimizing experiences that contradict them, setting up a dysfunctional cycle of “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Some examples of dysfunctional core beliefs include:

About Yourself

- Bad things I've done are not forgivable.
- I can't have what I want.
- I deserve to take what I want.
- I don't deserve love / happiness.
- I don't fit in.
- I fail no matter how hard I try.
- I must earn love to deserve it.
- I must hide my true feelings.
- I must please others to be worthy.
- I'll never live up to others' expectations.
- I'm not a worthwhile person.
- I'm not as smart as others, so I'm no good.
- I'm not capable / creative.
- I'm not important / lovable / respected.
- I'm not supposed to have fun.
- I'm stupid / ugly / boring / bad.
- It's not okay to feel good.
- My thoughts / opinions are dumb / unimportant.
- I am a mistake.

About the World

If I'm happy, something bad will happen.
Life is full of stress and overload.
Life is hard / unfair.
The world is tough, scary, angry, etc.
People are always trying to con me.
People are out to get me.
People don't want to listen to me.
The world isn't a safe place.
The world owes me a living.

About Relationships

All the good people are already taken.
Even if I try to explain, I won't be heard.
I can't attract / keep a good person.
I don't have what it takes to make it work.
I have to have a "great" body to be desirable.
I must take care of others no matter what.
I have to take what I can get.
I must control my partner.
I need my partner to be OK.
I'm not meant to have a relationship.
If I love I will be hurt.
If you really knew me you wouldn't like me.
It is my job to improve my partner.
My partner is a trophy for others to see.
I'm a failure if my relationship doesn't last.
I'll never find the right person.
Men / women want only one thing.
My family must approve of my relationship.
My partner can't get by without me.
Others know what's best for me.
People I depend on will let me down.
S/he is just after my money.
S/he doesn't accept me / understand me.
S/he is supposed to take care of me.
S/he should support me.
The one I love will abandon me.
We should enjoy doing the same things.
Women / men can't be trusted.
To be loved / accepted I must always agree.

Core beliefs are at the root of our thoughts, feelings, choices, reactions, patterns, and behaviors. They are also at the root of our pain, shame, fear, anxiety, stagnation, low self-esteem, grandiosity, and self-sabotage. If we change our beliefs, we can literally change our reality. Happily, these self-limiting core beliefs - no matter how firmly entrenched - can be changed. The formula for change is actually quite simple, though simple does not necessarily mean easy: **AWARENESS + ACTION = CHANGE**

The first requirement for change is **AWARENESS**. We cannot hope to change our core beliefs if we don't know what they are. This is not as obvious as it may sound. Many of these beliefs operate primarily at the subconscious level. We do not always consciously think about your core belief system but rather automatically react to our everyday experiences based upon them. We need to begin by questioning our own core beliefs to bring them to our conscious awareness.

The second component of change is **ACTION**. Once we become aware of our dysfunctional core beliefs, we must be willing to challenge them with healthier new beliefs, let go of the old ones, and begin practicing our new beliefs even before we fully accept them. In effect we must "fake it till we make it."

One way of becoming more aware of our core beliefs is to examine the attitudes we have about certain situations, which is where our core beliefs are reflected. The following is an example of an attitude and core belief, with a possible healthier new belief.

ATTITUDE: "Look at that rude guy driving that expensive car. Does he think he owns the entire road? Who does he think he is? Why can't I have a cool car like that? I'll bet he cheats people to make his money, or else his rich parents bought it for him."

Old Core Beliefs: The world isn't fair because it's easy for some to get what they want and tough for me. Rich people are rude. You have to be ruthless or lucky to have money. I'll never get what I want unless I compromise my values.

New Core Beliefs: Life is full of abundance and opportunity, and I am not limited from it. Another person having something good does not prevent me from having something good also. I can be happy for this person. I know that many people make money doing worthwhile things. If they can do it, so can I. It is not necessary for me to judge others. I can be grateful for what I have.

Most of our core beliefs deal with specific areas of the self that have been challenged through life experiences. The following are the most commonly affected areas and examples of core beliefs that may have been developed:

- 1. Self-Esteem:** (How I think of myself) I am better / worse than others. I am unworthy. My life is a mistake. The rules don't apply to me. The world revolves around me. I am always right / wrong. Don't you know who I am?
- 2. Pride:** (How I think others see me) Nobody loves me. I should be seen as the most / least important person in the world. Others should think I'm perfect. No one can see me make a mistake. People should never disagree with me. I am the focus of other people's thoughts. My motives should never be questioned. People are out to get me.
- 3. Money / Material Possessions:** (My desire for money and material possessions) I deserve money / possessions. I shouldn't have to work hard. I am jealous of others who have money / possessions because I am most deserving. Money makes me powerful. Money puts me in control. Money / possessions equal success. Money / possessions will make me happy.
- 4. Security:** (My well-being, what I need) My needs are more / less important than others. I need other's admiration and approval to be OK. I need to be right. If someone criticizes something I do they are criticizing me. When others disagree with me it's because they think I'm bad / stupid. When someone doesn't do what I want they are disrespecting me. If someone doesn't like me it means I'm a failure. Rejection means total abandonment. I will never be loved. I will never be OK.
- 5. Ambitions:** (My goals and plans for the future / what I want) Things should always go my way. I should always be happy. Everyone else should always do what I want. I want to be the center of attention. I want something for nothing. I want it all.
- 6. Personal Relationships:** (My relationships with others) I should be treated as the important person I am. Others are responsible for making me feel OK. Nobody should ever disappoint me. Others should meet all of my needs and wants. Worship me!
- 7. Sexual Relationships:** (My desire for sex and intimacy) S/he should desire and admire me. Women should be submissive to men. Men should take care of women. My sexual pleasure is more important. Sex equals love. Sex makes me powerful. Sex puts me in control. S/he is an object for my pleasure. Sexual performance makes me more (or less) of a (wo)man.

Using the previous examples, write down some of your own Core Beliefs regarding these areas of Self that apply to you. How do these Core Beliefs hurt, limit, or interfere with you, your relationships, and your peace of mind?

1. Self-esteem (How I think of myself):

2. Pride (How I think others see me):

3. Money / Material Possessions (My desire for money and possessions):

4. Security (My well-being; what I need):

5. Ambitions (My goals and plans for the future; what I want):

6. Personal Relationships (My relationship with others):

7. Sexual Relationships (My desire for sex and intimacy):

Dysfunctional core beliefs affect the way we see ourselves, others, and the world. Complete these statements with the first thing that honestly comes to your mind:

I am... _____

The main thing about me is... _____

If you really knew me... _____

I don't deserve... _____

My body is... _____

The world is... _____

One thing I'd like to change is... _____

Life is... _____

I hate it when... _____

People should... _____

I have to... _____

Relationships are... _____

I can depend on... _____

Women / Men are... _____

To be loved, I... _____