



Reframing Mistaken Beliefs

1. Sit down and write out a list of “Beliefs about Myself,” and let your writing fly. Pay special attention to your self-belief system that comes out of your younger years and still prevails today. But don’t think very long about each item. Let yourself do free-thinking as you compose both positive and negative items for this list.
2. After completing step 1, take your list of beliefs and look for the ones that most closely define how you feel about yourself. These are called your “core beliefs.” Note that at least some of them are negative. And most of the negative items have been around a long time. In your head, you may know they aren’t really true today, if indeed they ever were. But you still act as though they apply. For example, “I’m stupid,” “I rarely come off well with other people,” “if a partner ever gets to know me, (s)he will surely reject me,” are all possible negative core beliefs we live by.

Some core beliefs were once functional for us, that is, served a purpose in our world. Children who were verbally abused or worse for expressing their points of view grow up believing, “It’s not safe to say how you feel.” These beliefs were functional in childhood in that they kept the child safe, i.e. prevented physical and emotional harm. But in adulthood these become *dys*-functional beliefs that prevent one from experiencing the fullness of a healthy life and outlook.

3. Look over your list and highlight those core beliefs that now limit your emotional, mental or spiritual growth. Some of them may go under the category of once-functional, now-dysfunctional beliefs. Others may be redefined as a kind of “mental bad habit.” That is, many mistaken beliefs about ourselves have formed for various reasons over the years, and may actually be operating at an unconscious level now.
4. This leads to the most important step in this exercise. Rewrite each of your negative beliefs in behavioral terms rather than statements of fact. E.g. “I am stupid” might become “I am quite smart most of the time. I sometimes act in stupid ways when I don’t stop and consider my choices more carefully. But overall, I have accomplished a lot, and am overcoming my earlier conditioning that I am stupid.”
5. When you’ve finished the revised version of your core beliefs, reread them daily in their new form. Practice catching yourself in situations in which you are about to think in the old way of a mistaken belief. At that point, immediately take a deep slow breath, and let go of the old belief as you say the reframed belief to yourself, either out loud or quietly in the inner sanctum of your mind.
6. Repeat this exercise several thousand times (☺), and observe yourself with pride, as you gradually shed your old mental bad habits and replace them with healthy, functional reality-based beliefs about your self.