

OUR NEGATIVE CORE BELIEFS



A lot of anxiety and negative self-talk stems from our core beliefs. Learn how to identify, analyze, and change those core beliefs.



If you have already used our negative self-talk worksheet, then you may be wondering where some of that stems from. The answer is that many of the negative things we think about ourselves and others come from **our core beliefs**. Starting at a young age (especially before the age of six), everything you experience helps build your ideas about the world. These beliefs are formed without thought or intention and include beliefs about **ourselves, others, and the world**. When you hold a core belief about yourself, you will often act in a way that reinforces that belief, making it a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, you may believe you are incapable of making friends. Because you believe this, you do not engage with new people

when they try to talk to you. Since you refuse to talk to new people you never make friends, which reinforces your belief that you are incapable of making friends. It can be difficult to identify your core beliefs, especially since they are often beliefs you have held for so long you wouldn't think to question their validity. However, **by learning how to identify your own core beliefs, you can begin to understand the basis for your beliefs and where they came from, and then, if needed, replace them with more positive beliefs.**

IDENTIFYING CORE BELIEFS

Attached to this section is a Negative Core Beliefs Checklist. While this is not an all-encompassing checklist, reading through and marking which beliefs resonate with you can help you to get an idea for what kinds of core beliefs you hold. Feel free to reference this list.

Uncovering your core beliefs can be a difficult process. Do not shame yourself for these beliefs or be angry that you engaged with them. You will not be able to change your beliefs without first acknowledging their existence. Sometimes identifying negative self-talk can be helpful in identifying your core beliefs. If you are struggling to identify your core beliefs, consider using the Negative Self-Talk worksheet, too.

For example, you may receive constructive criticism from your boss and think to yourself, "I must be awful at my job." When you ask yourself where that thought came from, you may discover that you believe you must always do things right the first time.

ANALYZING CORE BELIEFS

Once you understand what some of your core beliefs are, you can begin to look at them and ask yourself where they came from and if they are helping or hurting your life. A good place to start is by figuring out how much you truly identify with or hold this core belief. There are different levels of engagement in core beliefs.

For example, let's say you have a belief. If you think about it and you do not logically or emotionally resonate with it, then it may be the easiest kind of belief to change. You could also understand logically that a belief is not true, while still emotionally resonating with it. If this is the case, you will not need to ask yourself questions about the truth of a belief. Instead you will want to **focus on what the belief does for your own wellbeing and where this belief came from**. Finally, you could logically and emotionally agree with a belief. If this is the case, you will want to ask yourself about the truth of the belief as well as what it is doing for your wellbeing. To get an idea of exactly what questions you can ask yourself, reference these questions:

- What is the evidence for this belief?
- Has this belief been true in every situation?
- Is there a bigger picture that this belief is ignoring?
- How does this belief impact my wellbeing? Is it helpful, harmful, or neutral?
- Where did this belief come from? From myself, or from others?



CHANGING CORE BELIEFS

If after asking yourself some questions you find that your core beliefs are not logical and are harmful to your wellbeing, the next step is to try and change the belief. First, think of evidence from past experiences that goes against a negative belief you have. For example, if your belief is "I am not smart," create a list of times that you displayed your intelligence. Often, you only notice the experiences that reinforce a core belief. You may tend to ignore the ones that challenge it. **By compiling a list of situations where your belief was not true, you will be more likely to believe that this belief should not be treated as fact.** Write down positive affirmations in response to your negative beliefs. Affirmations should be a positive statement that goes against the negative belief you hold. Affirmations are slightly different though, as they should be shorter statements such as, "I am in control of my life." Go through each negative core belief you identified with and write a short, first-person, present-tense statement. Once you have written these affirmations, choose just one or two to focus on at a time. **Affirmations are most effective when they are repeated often and said with true belief.** Once you have your affirmations, make sure that you are reminding yourself of it often. You can write it down and stick it where you will see every day, write it on a piece of paper over and over, or spend time meditating with the affirmation. Also try to notice times throughout your day where your affirmation is holding true. Keep a list with you and write down different experiences which reinforce your affirmation.

WORKSHEET EXAMPLES: IDENTIFYING & CHANGING CORE BELIEFS

We have provided examples from each worksheet to guide you as you answer these questions on your own.

IDENTIFYING & ANALYZING CORE BELIEFS

CORE BELIEF:

Nobody likes me.

DO YOU RESONATE WITH THIS (YES/NO): LOGICALLY NO EMOTIONALLY: YES

WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS BELIEF? HAS IT BEEN TRUE IN EVERY SITUATION?

A few specific people have told me that they do not like me, or quit talking to me with no explanation, leading me to believe that they don't like me. It has not happened in every situation/friendship.

WHERE DOES THIS BELIEF COME FROM? (SELF, FAMILY, FRIENDS, ETC)

My family has not communicated this to me, and neither have my friends. It comes from myself.

HOW DOES THIS BELIEF IMPACT YOUR WELLBEING? (HELPFUL, HARMFUL, NEUTRAL)

This belief is harmful to my wellbeing. It triggers and perpetuates my anxiety.

CHANGING CORE BELIEFS

CORE BELIEF:

Nobody likes me.

WHAT EVIDENCE FROM PAST EXPERIENCES DIRECTLY CHALLENGE YOUR BELIEF?

I have friends and have maintained friendships over the years. People invite me to do things and include me in important events, such as weddings.

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS THAT CHALLENGE THIS BELIEF?

People like me. My friends like me. My partner likes me.

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO UTILIZE THESE AFFIRMATIONS? (REPEATING, WRITING ON A NOTE, ETC)

I plan to put sticky notes with these affirmations on them near my coffee pot and on my nightstand so I am reminded first thing in the morning and right before bed.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTERWARDS? : (REVISIT AFTER PRACTICING)

After a few days of having my reminder in place and repeating it to myself throughout the day, I feel a little better. I even felt confident enough to reach out to an old classmate.

WORKSHEET: IDENTIFYING & ANALYZING CORE BELIEFS

In this worksheet you will practice identifying and analyzing your core beliefs by working through a series of questions to ask yourself.

Note: A list of common negative core beliefs attached if you need help getting started.

CORE BELIEF:

DO YOU RESONATE WITH THIS (YES/NO): LOGICALLY _____ EMOTIONALLY: _____

WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS BELIEF? HAS IT BEEN TRUE IN EVERY SITUATION?

WHERE DOES THIS BELIEF COME FROM? (SELF, FAMILY, FRIENDS, ETC)

HOW DOES THIS BELIEF IMPACT YOUR WELLBEING? (HELPFUL, HARMFUL, NEUTRAL)

CORE BELIEF:

DO YOU RESONATE WITH THIS (YES/NO): LOGICALLY _____ EMOTIONALLY: _____

WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS BELIEF? HAS IT BEEN TRUE IN EVERY SITUATION?

WHERE DOES THIS BELIEF COME FROM? (SELF, FAMILY, FRIENDS, ETC)

HOW DOES THIS BELIEF IMPACT YOUR WELLBEING? (HELPFUL, HARMFUL, NEUTRAL)

WORKSHEET: CHANGING CORE BELIEFS

In this worksheet you will begin to change your core belief. This will be done by identifying evidence that goes against your belief and making a plan to instill a new, positive belief to replace the old one.

CORE BELIEF:

WHAT EVIDENCE FROM PAST EXPERIENCES DIRECTLY CHALLENGE YOUR BELIEF?

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS THAT CHALLENGE THIS BELIEF?

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO UTILIZE THESE AFFIRMATIONS? (REPEATING, WRITING ON A NOTE, ETC)

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTERWARDS? : (REVISIT AFTER PRACTICING)

CORE BELIEF:

WHAT EVIDENCE FROM PAST EXPERIENCES DIRECTLY CHALLENGE YOUR BELIEF?

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS THAT CHALLENGE THIS BELIEF?

HOW DO YOU PLAN TO UTILIZE THESE AFFIRMATIONS? (REPEATING, WRITING ON A NOTE, ETC)

HOW ARE YOU FEELING AFTERWARDS? : (REVISIT AFTER PRACTICING)

RESOURCE: NEGATIVE CORE BELIEFS



We have provided a list of common negative core beliefs that people hold about themselves, others, and the world.

COMMON NEGATIVE CORE BELIEFS

ABOUT MYSELF

- I'm not good enough
- I'm stupid
- I don't deserve love
- I'm a bad person
- I don't fit in with others
- I am not good at making friends
- I don't deserve happiness
- I'm lazy
- My feelings aren't important
- I always mess things up
- I never meet expectations
- I am weak
- I am a failure
- I am ugly
- I am fat
- I am bad at my job
- I am a bad friend
- I need to be productive to be valuable
- I am powerless
- I don't need help
- I will never get better
- I am too sensitive
- My problems are unfixable
- I have to please others to be valuable
- I have to be perfect to be accepted

ABOUT THE WORLD

- The world is dangerous
- The world is unfair
- The world is scary
- The world is unhappy

ADD YOUR OWN

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ABOUT OTHERS

- Nobody likes me
- People are not trustworthy
- Everyone lies
- Everyone leaves
- People are shallow
- Everyone is better than me
- Everyone is more attractive than me
- People are selfish
- Life is easier for others
- People never listen to others
- All men care about is looks
- All women care about is money
- All women are needy
- All relationships are unhealthy
- Everyone is more successful than me
- Other people have perfect lives
- Other people are smarter than me
- All men are unfaithful
- Nobody wants to help me
- Nobody cares about my problems
- They don't want to be with someone like me
- They don't love me
- They are not attracted to me
- They think I'm stupid

- Nothing good will ever happen
- The world is cruel
- There is no point to life
- The world can't be changed