

BELIEVE IT!

BECOME IT!

MODULE TWO



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MODULE 2

Power Belief #1 “I Can Create Change”

**“If we don't change direction soon, we'll end up where we're going.”
Irwin Corey**

An event may be crucial in the short term, but researchers find that people's enduring self-concept—their view of who they are and what they are capable of—is not tied to any single positive or negative event. Instead, a self-concept is composed of a combination of beliefs and feelings based on long-term experiences both at home and at work (Black, 1999).

Researchers find that an optimistic personal outlook is more than just seeing the bright side of things. Believing in yourself actually produces increases in good health, motivation, and achievement for six in ten people (Schulman, 1999).

I Choose My Thoughts, Words and Actions

The first step to **becoming** is to get yourself out of the way.

Michael despised his cubicle. He was envious each morning as he passed the offices with doors, occupied by executives behind large mahogany desks. Michael wanted a promotion, but it was a wish, not a goal. A wish is a goal without the do and the deadline.

One evening Michael expressed his discontent to his wife. She quickly reminded him that he should be grateful for his job and be content. “Don't make waves,” his wife counseled. “We're fine the way things are. Don't do anything that might put your job at risk!”

The next day Michael repeated her words in his mind as he walked by the executive offices. And he thought, “She's right. I'm not smart enough to get promoted, anyway.”

What if Michael had taken another path in his mind? Instead of going down the low road of Negative Thought, he could be striding confidently along the high road of Positive Belief that always leads to successful **becoming**.

You have a myriad of choices every moment, and your mind will take you wherever you wish. The very first and most important thing you need to understand is your role in creating the results that are your life.

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Zig Ziglar remarked, “You are free to choose, but the choices you make today will determine what you will have, be, and do in the tomorrow of your life.” Indeed, our lives are a sum total of the choices we make.

You Create Your Life with the Choices You Make Each Day

This isn't always what we want to admit, because frequently our choices lead us to negative results. But the truth is: we own our lives. Whether we're happy, unhappy, successful or unsuccessful, we're accountable for our choices.

Admittedly, many people are weighed down with challenges that are absolutely no fault of their own. Children are abused, parents divorce, fat genes are part of life, and bad things happen to good people. But right now, as adults, we have choices regarding how we deal with our past and present circumstances. We can either point fingers, blame, withdraw, resent, or we can turn our faces to the future and focus on solutions. We can allow ourselves to be pulled backwards, or we can “take the best and discard the rest” from past experiences, and move forward. The choice is ours.

When you choose to resist or deny ownership for your life and for your choices, you also choose stagnation, because as long as you're convinced that you're a victim, you simply cannot begin to heal and progress. If you truly want to improve your life then you must embrace the principle of choice and accountability. This is about taking responsibility for your thoughts, words, and actions. This wonderful principle has the power to set you free from damaging beliefs about yourself and others who may have hurt you. It has the power to release people from all negative habits. As you practice this principle you learn how to live above everything that attempts to pull you down or backwards. So let's learn how to harness the power this principle provides.

The First Power Belief, “**I Can Create Change,**” has three parts:

First, assess where you are in your belief patterns; how you habitually think about yourself, others and your circumstances.

Second, understand the principle of choice. This principle makes change possible.

Third, learn how to release yourself from damaging beliefs by controlling and directing your thoughts.

Assess Your Belief Patterns

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Honestly answer these twelve questions.

1. Do I usually think positive thoughts about myself and others?
2. Do I think I'm fairly attractive?
3. Am I usually clever in social situations?
4. Do most of the people in my life's circle like me?
5. Am I kind to my family members?
6. Does my family know that I love them?
7. Am I assertive when I need to be?
8. Do I usually make wise choices about most things in life?
9. Am I generally happy with my home and neighborhood?
10. On most days do I like my job?
11. When I help others do I do it cheerfully?
12. Do I look to the future with optimism?

How did you do? Were most of your answers “no” or “yes?” On one end of the scale are those who answered every question with a “yes.” You are usually kind, optimistic people with healthy self-confidence. Your belief patterns are consistently positive and you'll easily handle the second and third parts of this Power Belief. On the other end of the scale are those who answered every question with a “no.” In parts two and three of this Power Belief you'll discover ways to lift yourself to a higher, happier level of living.

Most people answered some questions “no” and some “yes.” For you, portions of the next two parts will come easily and, using the Daily Action Plan, you'll quickly release yourself from all damaging beliefs and as you learn how to control and direct your thoughts.

The Principle of Choice Makes Change Possible

I remember the very moment it happened. It was one of those life-altering experiences we often describe as “ah-ha moments” when the mind suddenly seems to expand with new understanding. I was sitting on the front row of a seminar on strengthening relationships when the speaker quoted Eleanor Roosevelt. That great lady said, **“No one can make me feel inferior without my consent.”** I remember thinking, *Wow! That means that we allow people to offend us; we allow people to make us angry. Our reaction to people and our circumstances is our choice!* And then my mind took it a step further and I thought, *that means that if we can allow people to make us angry, we can refuse to be offended or angry!*

Time actually seemed to stand still as I pondered, then understood, this incredible concept: **We can respond to others and to our circumstances however we choose.** And I realized that the time had come to take control of my life.

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Soon afterwards I learned about Victor Frankl. Let me take you to the place where he learned this same priceless lesson:

Victor Frankl Story

The year is 1945. You are in Auschwitz, Germany imprisoned in a concentration camp whose horror defies description. Your entire family has been killed. You're a Jewish psychiatrist named Viktor Frankl. The guards have stripped you, beaten you, starved you and deprived you of sleep. And yet you live on, determined to somehow create meaning out of this horror. As you are experiencing this hell on earth you come to an incredible understanding. The guards can torture you, but you have the power to respond to them however you *choose*. They can beat you, but they can't take away your will to live. They can strip you, but you can clothe yourself with mental power beyond their reach. They can starve you, but you can feast on your dreams of the future. You see, Victor Frankl imagined himself at a university pulpit, teaching the future generation about the ultimate freedom - the freedom to choose how you respond to life. He was passionate about living to tell his story so that never again would a human being be allowed to cause such suffering as he had endured.

Those prison guards couldn't make Victor Frankl angry or discouraged. Think how our lives would change if we truly understood and applied this concept! We would no longer blame others. We wouldn't say, "You make me angry!" because we'd understand that no one *makes* us angry; we can choose to be in control of our emotions. We would no longer blame other people, our circumstances, the weather, etc. for anything. We wouldn't say, "I can't get up that early - I'm just not a morning person!" because we're any kind of a person we choose to be. We wouldn't say, "I'm in a bad mood because the boss is being a jerk today." Or, "My kids are making me crazy!" Do you see how it works?

This is an incredibly important principle. This means that you and you alone own your thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. Is this difficult? Yes, because it's easier when you can point to someone else while you're saying, "It's not my fault - he made me do it!"

This is a wonderful, liberating principle with monumental significance as it relates to personal progress.

"I Choose My Thoughts, Words and Actions" is part of the first Power Belief because it's the key to personal growth. You must take responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions if you are to move forward in your life. It is imperative that you understand this principle thoroughly in order to progress. To help you do that, here are three stories of people who do *not* get it.

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Marlene and David Didn't Get It

Marlene was furious at David, her husband. It was 7:30 at night and he still wasn't home. She had made a lovely dinner and had prepared his favorite dessert. Marlene and both children had waited until 7:00 o'clock, but they finally gave up and ate without him. With each passing minute Marlene became angrier. She complained to the children about their father's irresponsibility, and after dinner she impatiently paced the floor. When David finally arrived, Marlene exploded with a flood of accusations and belittling remarks.

Was Marlene's behavior justified? Maybe David had promised to be home at 6:00 pm and this was the fourteen time he was late. Maybe it was the first time he was late. That doesn't matter. The question is, should David's behavior determine Marlene's reaction?

If Marlene understood that we are responsible for our emotions, regardless of the words or actions of others, perhaps she would have handled it differently. Her children certainly would have learned a far different lesson that night. This is how the evening might have looked if Marlene didn't blame David:

Marlene thought, *Darn, David is late again. I wonder what happened. I hope this dessert will taste as good when he gets home.* "Well, kids," she remarked cheerfully, "It looks like Dad won't be here for dinner, but look how delicious this looks! Hop up to the table and let's eat." Then instead of focusing on David and the possible reasons for why he wasn't there, Marlene focused on the children. She asked each one about what they learned at school that day, she shared her experiences of the day, and she genuinely enjoyed the meal. After dinner Marlene read stories to the children.

Does understanding this principle mean that we never get upset when things go wrong? Of course not. The difference is that we don't blame others for our reactions. We learn how to control our emotions and we wait until an appropriate time to discuss the problem. And when the time comes to talk about it we communicate in a way that doesn't create more problems.

Another unhealthy scenario occurs when people choose not to *say* anything, but instead harbor negative, critical *thoughts*.

A Lesson Learned

Joseph and his wife Sharon love their family, and stay in close touch with their children and their grandchildren. When their daughter, Jody, began having marital problems, they were concerned and supported her the best way they knew how. After her divorce, she began dating heavily and brought her two young children to Grandpa and Grandma's house often. Joseph and Sharon wanted Jody to be happy; but as time went on, they felt more and more used. They began

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resenting the grandchildren and became angry with their daughter. However, they didn't say anything to her and continued to watch the children each time she asked because they were afraid she'd be upset.

How would Joseph and Sharon handle this situation if they understood that 1) when we allow someone to make us a victim, it's our choice, and 2) we're all responsible for our thoughts, words and actions?

As soon as Jody began bringing her children too often, Joseph and Sharon could have started a calm discussion with their daughter. "Jody, we love you and want you to be happy, but we're not comfortable tending the children as often as you want us to. We'll be glad to watch them one evening each week." Then (and this is important) Joseph and Sharon would likely begin think more kindly about their daughter and grandchildren. If unkind thoughts crept in, they would label them as such and work on replacing them.

Does this take mental strength? Yes. Can it be done? Absolutely! Let's examine one more example:

Two Endings to the Story

Diane thought she should be promoted at work. She was qualified, she worked hard, and she did everything she was asked to do. However, when promotions were announced, Diane was overlooked and Steven got the job she wanted. Diane told every co-worker, "I am *way* more qualified than Steven, and I've been here longer!" She repeated her disapproval for weeks. Then she began coming late to work, and not giving 100% of her effort when she was there. "Well," Diane reasoned, "Why should I do my best when it doesn't make any difference? If those executives had given me the promotion, I would've been great. It's their fault I'm turning in lousy work."

If Diane understood that when you take responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions, you don't blame others, her behavior would have been far different:

When she heard the news that Steve got the promotion, Diane could have swallowed her pride and congratulated him. Although she may have been disappointed, she would have understood that it wasn't Steve's fault, or the executive's fault. "*You know,*" Diane thought, "*There must be a bigger picture that I don't see. Oh, well, there will be other promotions, and I'm going to work really hard to qualify for the next one.*"

But You Don't Understand!

As you read those examples, you may think, "*You don't understand! I have some real challenges in my life. And there are genuine toxic personalities I have to deal with on a daily*

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basis! It's really NOT my fault that my life is the way it is. It's my parent's fault - or my wife's fault - or my boss' fault."

OK, let's go there.

First, let me console you by saying that it is at the very core of human nature to blame other people. It's like "survival of the fittest" - self-preservation - to try to escape accountability. You don't want to be responsible, because if you are, you're accountable. Then you have to experience the consequences of your mistakes, *every* time. You're where the buck stops.

It's far more difficult to accept accountability for your life. But once you "get it" and grab hold - taking responsibility for the results in your life - you'll begin achieving as you've *never* achieved before. If you truly want to progress, you must go to work and take control of every part of your life.

However, let me be very clear: Until you stop blaming others for your problems; until you stop convincing yourself that you are a victim, you will never progress. You will remain in a backwards-focus, finger-pointing mode that spells f-a-i-l-u-r-e. No growth. No achievement. No extraordinary life.

On a plaque that hung in Mother Teresa's Calcutta orphanage, Kent Keith wrote the following words:

People are often unreasonable and self-centered,
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives.
Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you.
Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous.
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.
Give your best anyway.

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For you see, in the end, it is between you and God.
It was never between you and them anyway.

To Move Forward, Embrace This

To move forward with your life you must fully embrace the fact that the solutions to each and every one of your life's challenges lie within you.

Remember the examples above? Since Marlene understands that she creates her own results, she doesn't believe that her husband's behavior justifies her losing control; so she chooses to focus on enjoying the meal and her children.

If Joseph and Sharon accept accountability for their lives, they'll take control of the situation as soon as it becomes uncomfortable for them and create a positive solution.

When Diane accepts accountability for her life, she is then able to take her loss in stride, with graciousness and dignity. She can move forward in her life, free of anger and envy - two "companions" of those who don't accept responsibility for the results in their lives.

You may believe that something in your childhood, which was far beyond your control, caused you pain and that's why you are troubled.

How about the little girl who was raped, or the little boy who was molested? How can they possibly "create their own results?" People who have had their childhoods stolen, for any reason, often feel that since they were wronged, they aren't accountable for their own behavior as adults.

No one will disagree that hurting children is a grievous sin. The adults who caused such pain are depraved and should be punished. However, you will never fix your problems blaming someone else. When you were a child, you didn't have the power to choose the events in your life; but things have changed, and you are an adult, now. As an adult, you can choose your reaction to those childhood events and circumstances. To move past the past, you must understand that in the todays and tomorrows of your life, you can gain control by accepting responsibility for your thoughts, words and actions.

Relative to unfortunate events in your past, you have choices. You can re-live them, focusing backwards with a pointed finger. Or you can face forward, replacing past sadness with **positive beliefs** about who you are now, and with **positive goals** to create the successful person you'll be tomorrow. The choice is yours. I'm guessing that since you're reading this book, you've already made the right choice. Let's move on to *how* to replace past sadness and damaging beliefs with positive ones. Later, we'll talk about those positive goals.

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Release Yourself from Damaging Beliefs

We each carry with us mental pictures of ourselves; our “self beliefs.” These beliefs may be unclear to our conscious mind, but they are there, down to the last detail. They are our ideas about who we are, formed from past experiences, successes and failures, embarrassing moments, achievements, (both big and small), and the way people have treated us, especially during our childhood. From all of these experiences, we mentally create pictures of ourselves. Once a belief about ourselves goes into this picture, it becomes a “fact” to us and we don’t question its validity; we act as though it were true.

Your self beliefs form the foundation for your personality and your behavior. Therefore, these self beliefs are the key to change. This is true for two reasons: First, your actions are always consistent with your beliefs. Second, your beliefs *can* be changed.

Simply stated, **we act like the person we believe ourselves to be.** We literally cannot act otherwise, in spite of our conscious efforts. Because our actions are always in harmony with our beliefs, ideas which are inconsistent with our beliefs are rejected (by our subconscious minds), not believed, and therefore not acted upon.

It should be clear, then, only ideas that are consistent with our core beliefs will be accepted and acted upon.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz, author of *Psycho-Cybernetics*, underscored this when he wrote: “The man who conceives himself to be a ‘failure type person’ will find some way to fail, in spite of all his good intentions, or his will power, even if opportunity is literally dumped in his lap. The person who conceives himself to be a victim of injustice, one ‘who was meant to suffer,’ will invariably find circumstances to verify his opinions.”

For example, many people are told, when they’re young, that they’re no good in math. Parents say things like, “None of our family is good in math. We just don’t understand it!” Other parents make similar comments regarding music, athletics, etc. Remember back to your own childhood. Did anyone ever tell you that you weren’t a good singer, or that you couldn’t draw well? Or perhaps you were told that you’d never be a good basketball player, and so on. Most adults can easily remember stinging comments like these.

Children who hear such remarks, day after day, soon come to believe them. They create negative self-talk (how we talk to ourselves in our minds). They think, “*I’m just no good in math, none of my family is.*” Or, “*I could never make the team, so I just won’t try out.*” Or, “*Since I can’t sing, I shouldn’t take chorus, and I’d make a fool of myself if I tried out for the school musical.*” Then, sure enough, these same children don’t excel in those areas, and usually their report cards verify their beliefs. Children then have “proof” that they’re failures. And

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because of this objective “proof,” they don’t question their incompetence. Sadly, *these young people don’t ever think that the trouble may lie in their own beliefs about themselves*. And yet, tell a young person who is failing in math that he only “thinks” he can’t understand it and he won’t believe you! He’s tried and tried, and still his report card tells the story. Often he gets a low score on a test, and instead of saying, “I failed that test,” he’ll think to himself, “*Yep, I’m a failure!*”

And perhaps the saddest fact of all is that we carry these negative beliefs throughout our lives! We develop limiting beliefs about who we are and what we’re capable of from our earliest years, then we carry those negative self beliefs for decades. Based on past failures, we believe we’ll fail in the future. But the wonderful news is – *the past doesn’t equal the future!*

How about the businesswoman who believes she can’t sell? Oh, she’ll agree that she has good people-skills; she’s friendly and personable. But this woman was rejected by the first six people to whom she tried to sell a product, and now firmly believes she’ll never be a good salesperson. “I’m just not good at it,” she’ll explain. Additionally, she believes that she will never earn more than a certain figure, and her paycheck proves it month after month. And sometimes, instead of saying, “I’m not a good salesperson,” she says, “I’m a failure.” And then she allows her failure in one area to affect other areas of her life.

Our life experiences confirm, and thereby strengthen, our self beliefs, and positive or negative cycles are created.

Most of us recognize that we have a few negative self beliefs that impede our progress and personal growth in some areas. But the good news is that negative self beliefs can be changed! We’re never too young or too old to reverse our negative beliefs and start living a life full of extraordinary achievements!

More Than Positive Thinking

What we’re talking about is more than “positive thinking,” however. This is about changing your core self beliefs. It’s not about someone gritting his teeth and thinking, “I *will* make this sale!” Rather, thoughts about ‘self’ are altered. He thinks, “I am a successful salesman. In fact, I do quite well at most things!” Pessimistic, harmful core beliefs need to be fundamentally changed into positive ones.

Dr. Maltz wrote, “It is literally impossible to really think positively about a particular situation as long as you hold a negative concept of self. And numerous experiments have shown that once the concept of self is changed, other things consistent with the new concept of self are accomplished easily and without strain.”

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When you change your negative self-beliefs, which underlie all of your negative actions, you increase your ability to act in positive ways. Then, achieving your goals – in every area of your life - becomes easier and easier.

Let's get real clarity about a few points we've discussed:

1. You are who you are because of the dominating thoughts you permit in your mind.
2. You can either choose to attack yourself with negativity or affirm your abilities.
3. Positive mental picturing is a key to healthy change. You are the writer, director and star of either an Oscar-winning epic (an extraordinary life) or a Grade 'B' movie (less than your best). The person you see in your imagination will always rule your world.

The key is you. You must:

- Believe you can change, and *want* to change your negative self-beliefs
- Identify the beliefs you need to alter
- Learn and use key skills

Believe You Can Change Your Negative Self-beliefs

To take control in any area of your life, the very first step is to create a belief that says with certainty, "I can do this!" When you develop this sense of certainty, you can accomplish virtually anything.

People develop this certainty in different ways. Some people take the first step and realize on their own (before life becomes painful) that change is not only possible, but highly desirable. Other people have family and friends who lovingly point out the need for change, and encourage them in positive directions. Still others don't have a support system; they "go it alone." Then, when the pain becomes too great, they find the courage within to change. Many look to God for additional strength to move forward and break the cycle of negativity or destruction in their lives.

Those who struggle to believe they *can* change their negative self-beliefs, and develop a powerful sense of certainty, may be encouraged by those who hurdled similar barriers.

Tawni, from Utah, desperately tried to overcome her negative feelings. She shares her story:

I had absolute terror panic attacks which would render me completely sleepless and immobile. This fear would drive my decisions about activities, travel, work, etc. What got me through it? The number one thing was my desire. Down to my toes I desired to be free! I'm now 46 years old, and it took approximately 44 years to achieve, but I'm

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here! The second “help” was *my total belief* that God would help me conquer. Third, were friends, and learning about kinesiology. I learned about how the brain/body is organized and balanced. I worked hard at this, and eventually my old patterns of fear went out and I put calm, new ones in. My advice to others who want to accomplish this is to *believe it can be done*, trust God, and get educated about your problem. Celebrate your baby step improvements. I can now stay alone, travel alone, and I think completely differently. I am finally free!

Sara, age 23, from California, described her struggles and accomplishment:

Since childhood I have been a compulsive overeater. It was the compulsive overeating combined with depression and extremely low self esteem that led to my eating disorder of Bulimia Nervosa. I was bulimic every day for almost two years during my college years. It was then I became completely powerless over binge vomiting. It was something I could not give up. I would wake up in the morning praying for the strength to make it just one day without bingeing or vomiting, and by lunch time I had already succumbed to the disease. Every day was a struggle to survive. After seeking professional help, I was led to Overeaters Anonymous (OA) and *they helped me believe* I could do this. I became abstinent after two weeks of attending the program. I relapsed six months later but was able to regain abstinence. It has been nearly three years since I've been in recovery.

The answer for me was *believing I could change*, sharing my thoughts and feelings at the OA meetings, and being accepted unconditionally. They knew how to cure my unbelieving heart. Also, picking up the phone and talking to others brought my despairing mind back to reality. Another thing that helped me is service. Doing charitable acts of kindness for others always helped me feel better. Lastly, journal writing, reading good books, and praying have been things I've done to get me through the hard times.

My advice to others is to not give up, no matter what. You may slip and fall and feel like your troubles will never end, but “this too shall pass.” One day at a time is all you have to get through. *Begin by believing you can do it.*

One of my heroes, the ever-positive Walt Disney, once said, “When you believe in a thing, believe in it all the way, implicitly and unquestionably.” I would like to urge you to believe in your power and ability to change; believe you can turn from negativity and from every damaging belief that pulls you backwards; believe you can replace harmful beliefs with new, positive ones that will catapult you forward to exhilarating success.

Identify the Beliefs You Need to Alter

To begin any change, first you need to identify all behaviors needing change, because you can't alter what you don't acknowledge. And if you refuse to acknowledge your own self-

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destructive beliefs and behaviors, not only will they continue, they'll become more deeply entrenched and grow more resistant to change.

Acknowledgement of your weaknesses (and strengths) requires absolute honesty about what is and what isn't working in your life. You need to know both what's working, (which you can *celebrate*) and what's not, so you can fix it.

I offer an exercise that will help you identify the beliefs you need to alter. However, before we begin:

- First, give yourself permission to examine and question every belief you now hold about yourself.
- Second, open your mind to the possibility that some of your beliefs – even ones you've firmly held as true - may be false.
- Third, allow the possibility that some of your beliefs may be preventing you from moving forward as you'd like.

Now, we're ready for the exercise. Relax and take an unhurried few moments to answer the questions below (simply reflect on your responses to each question; nothing need be written down for this exercise).

1. Name the person or people who bring you the greatest joy. Think about why they make you happy.
2. Name the thing you enjoy doing the most. Think about how you feel when you're doing it.
3. Name a place you love to go. Think about that place and, using your imagination, "go there" for a few moments.
4. Now, name a person in your life who causes you sadness and pain. Did you just go from peace to agitation? Why?
5. Name what you like least about your job or about your family. Feel what's happening to your state of mind as you go there.
6. Think about a time when someone you care about humiliated or deeply hurt you.

If you did that exercise thoughtfully, taking your time and imagining in great detail, you experienced the marvelous power of the mind. In a matter of seconds, you can go from happiness and peace to agitation and discomfort, even anger. This same mind power will be your ally as you attempt to identify the negative behaviors in your life that need altering. As you carefully question your self-beliefs, in your heart of hearts, you will know what needs correcting in your life.

And, with that same mind power, you can control your thoughts - if you choose. There are

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three steps. Each one is mandatory, if you are to successfully control your thoughts.

1. **LABEL**
2. **REPLACE**
3. **FOCUS FORWARD**

Label Your Negative Thoughts

Labeling your negative thoughts is like casting a light into a dark room—it disperses the darkness (negativity). Labeling is the critical part of this “solution” because when a negative thought enters your mind, you can either pay attention and stop it - by labeling it immediately - or you can let your mind take you along a negative path and allow the thought to grow and fester. A far better choice is to “nip it in the bud.” This requires you to exert some willpower and strength of character. The very moment a negative thought enters your mind, label it with something like:

- “That was negative.”
- “That was unkind.” (Name the thought: critical, judgmental, etc.)
- “That wasn’t like me. I usually don’t think negative thoughts.”

The third comment (above) is a superb self-fulfilling prophecy that helps people hurdle the barrier of habitually negative thought patterns.

Replace Your Negative Thoughts

Replacing negative thoughts is most effectively done by trying to ‘be’ the person you’re thinking about, with their needs and life experiences. This requires you to put yourself in the other person’s position and really consider why he’s speaking or acting as he is. Most of the time, with this perspective, even if you don’t agree with the person, at least you can replace the negative thought with something like:

- “I can understand why she’s doing (saying) that. It’s because she...”
- “If I understood her better, I’d probably like her more. I’ll get to know her.”
- “Too bad he acts (talks) that way. What can I learn from it?”
- “Different strokes for different folks!”

Focus Your Thinking Forward

Healthy forward thinking is the third step. Instead of focusing backwards, blaming others, or wallowing in negativity, fill your mind with positive thoughts that move you forward. Is it always easy? No. Is it possible? Absolutely! Does it sometimes take creativity? You bet. Here

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are some examples of positive, forward thinking that are solution-based:

- “I usually don’t think unkind thoughts like that. I’ll do better next time.”
- “Tomorrow will be better. Good days usually follow rough ones!”
- “I might not have all the facts. I’ll learn more and it’ll probably make sense.”

And this is perfect for adults who regret any past action:

- “I made the best decision I could with the information I had at the time. I have more information now, and I’ll do better in the future.”

The steps to change negative self-beliefs aren’t difficult. But, as with all things worth doing, the process requires effort. And yet, don’t let yourself become discouraged if you have trouble in the beginning, if changing your thought patterns proves to be difficult for you. Your previous ways of thinking are habits and **it takes about three to six weeks to break a habit**. Have the courage to keep trying until you naturally and easily think predominantly positive thoughts.

It comes back to the question, “How badly do you really want to change?” And that reminds me of a well-known story about Socrates.

What The Seeker Needs

One afternoon, a young man approached Socrates, the wise old philosopher, and exclaimed, “Socrates, I want to know what you know! I want knowledge and wisdom like yours!” The gentle Socrates replied, “Very well, young man. Follow me.” And he led the youth to a nearby pond, where he held the boy’s head under the water for quite a long time. When Socrates finally released his grip, the young man jerked up out of the water and gasped, “Socrates! Why did you do that?” The philosopher calmly asked, “Young man, when you were under the water, what did you want most in the world?” The boy answered, “Air! I wanted air!” And then Socrates patiently explained, “Young man, when you want knowledge and wisdom as badly as you wanted air, you’ll find a way to get it.”

I would like to submit that when your desire for change and improvement is great enough, you’ll make the effort to control your thoughts and direct them in positive ways.

We’ll conclude this Power Belief the way we began – by assessing your self beliefs in an attempt to ascertain the positive ones that empower and strengthen you, and the negative ones that limit you. You’ll keep the first and discard the second.

BELIEVE IT!
BECOME IT!

This is first done by carefully questioning and examining your beliefs. Now take a quality moment of unhurried time – right now – and ask yourself these questions:

Do I have beliefs (that I may have held for years) which might be wrong? What are they?

Now, it's tough to re-examine your core beliefs. It is difficult to scrutinize the personal convictions you've held for years. You're doing this, though, because some of your closely-held beliefs might be preventing you from reaching your goals and becoming your ideal self. Defining and questioning those beliefs is the first step.

To discover your long-held limiting beliefs, ask *why* you either succeed or fail in each of these life areas:

Ask yourself two questions for each area in your life:

- Physical Do I excel physically? If not, why not?
- Mental
- Social
- Emotional
- Financial
- Spiritual
- With Relationships

Now ask yourself (in each area):

“What positive beliefs can replace my negative ones?”

Here's an example of how to do this:

Physical. *Do I excel?* “No.” *Why not?* “Because I was never any good at sports. I was overweight/My parents didn't encourage me/There wasn't an athletic program at my school.”

What positive beliefs can replace the negative ones? “Even though I wasn't involved in sports in school, it isn't too late to start learning and getting in shape. I can swim each morning with the community group at the local pool/I can jog around the high school track before work in the mornings, and perhaps join a competitive program for masters when I'm ready/I can join the local work-out facility/I can shoot hoops with my buddies (or children). It's never too late to have fun!”

Another exercise that provides clarity begins with asking yourself the following questions:

“What will the consequences be (what will happen) if I continue believing as I do?”

BELIEVE IT!

BECOME IT!

“Will those consequences bring me happiness or unhappiness?”

“What would I have to believe in order to succeed and enjoy greater happiness?”

The answers to these questions will most likely be revealing. Remember, one well-known definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results.” If some part of your life isn't working, question your beliefs and make changes.

Examine each belief that keeps you from being successful – at home, at work, in your relationships, etc. and replace those negative beliefs with positive ones. Choose beliefs that empower you and make you a better person. Release yourself from damaging beliefs. It will take effort and creativity, but the rewards are unlimited. I suggest you do this self-discovery exercise with a loved one who deeply cares about your well-being, and with whom you are completely comfortable.

“Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time; what we want is for things to remain the same but get better.”

Sydney Har

BECOME IT!