

In this book you will not be bombarded with a set of canned values that you are expected to adopt wholesale. You will be asked instead to become a personal scientist, to investigate your past and your present with as much openness and honesty as you can. You will be asked to experiment, to take risks, and to record the outcomes so that you can realistically test deeply held beliefs about yourself. Only by testing, experimenting, and noticing what happens can you determine the truth of what you have believed for so long.

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Identifying Your Core Beliefs

You may or may not be aware of your core beliefs right now. Most likely you are in touch with one or two, but the full scope of your beliefs remains unclear.

This chapter will help you identify your core beliefs and bring them sharply into focus. You'll try two different approaches. First, taking the Core Beliefs Inventory will show you how you rate yourself in ten areas of life that often contain troublesome core beliefs. The second approach is the Monologue Diary, where you keep track of your painful feelings, the situations in which they arise, and the inner monologues that typically make you feel bad. By analyzing the situations and your self-statements, you can uncover your underlying core beliefs.

Both approaches are valuable. The Core Beliefs Inventory is relatively simple and easy, providing quick insights and a clear overview of common core beliefs. The Monologue Diary takes more time, but it helps you capture the unique, particular flavor of your core beliefs — the overtones and shadings that can come only from your own experiences.

It's important that you actually *do* the exercises, not just read through the instructions and *imagine* doing them. The exercises are not just a way of imparting information. The experience of doing the exercises will teach you valuable self-examination skills on which your success in using the rest of the book depends.

Core Beliefs Inventory

Adapted in part from Jeffrey Young's (1990) Schema Questionnaire

After each of the 100 statements that follow, circle T or F according to whether you think the statement is mostly true or mostly false. In cases where it's a close decision, go with your first impulse. It's important to complete every item, circling the T or the F (but not both), in order to get an accurate score at the end. But this is not a test — there are no right or wrong answers, or better and worse ways to complete the inventory.

Mostly True *Mostly False*

1. T F I am worthy of love and respect.
2. T F My world is a pretty safe place.
3. T F I perform many tasks well.
4. T F I am in control of my life.
5. T F I feel loved and cared for.
6. T F I can rely upon myself.
7. T F The world is neither fair nor unfair.
8. T F I feel a strong sense of belonging in my family and community.
9. T F Most people can be trusted.
10. T F I set reasonable standards for myself.
11. T F I often feel flawed or defective.
12. T F Life is dangerous — a medical, natural, or financial disaster could strike any time.
13. T F I'm basically incompetent.

14. T F I have very little control over my life.
15. T F I've never felt really cared for by my family.
16. T F Others can care for me better than I can care for myself.
17. T F I get upset when I don't get what I want — I hate to take no for an answer.
18. T F I frequently feel left out of groups.
19. T F Many people would like to hurt me or take advantage of me.
20. T F Very little of what I do satisfies me — I usually think I could do better.
21. T F I feel OK about myself.
22. T F I can protect myself from most dangers.
23. T F Doing some things comes easy for me.
24. T F I have the power I need to solve most of my problems.
25. T F I have at least one satisfying intimate relationship.
26. T F It's OK to disagree with others.
27. T F I accept it when I don't get what I want.
28. T F I fit in well with my circle of friends.
29. T F I rarely need to protect or guard myself with other people.
30. T F I can forgive myself for failure.

31. T F Nobody I desire would desire me if they really got to know me.
32. T F I worry about getting sick or hurt.
33. T F When I trust my own judgment, I make wrong decisions.
34. T F Events just bowl me over sometimes.
35. T F My relationships are shallow — if I disappeared tomorrow, no one would notice.
36. T F I find myself going along with others' plans.
37. T F There are certain things I simply must have to be happy.
38. T F I feel like an outsider.
39. T F Most people think only of themselves.
40. T F I'm a perfectionist; I must be the best at whatever I do.
41. T F I have legitimate needs I deserve to fill.
42. T F I am willing to take risks.
43. T F I am a competent person, as capable as most people.
44. T F My impulses don't control me.
45. T F I feel nurtured in my family.
46. T F I don't need the approval of others for everything I do.
47. T F Things tend to work out, even in the end.

48. T F People usually accept me as I am.
49. T F I seldom feel taken advantage of.
50. T F I set achievable goals for myself.
51. T F I'm dull and boring and can't make interesting conversation.
52. T F If I'm not careful with my money, I might end up with nothing.
53. T F I tend to avoid new challenges.
54. T F I fear I'll give in to overwhelming crying, anger, or sexual impulses.
55. T F I'm afraid of being abandoned — that a loved one will die or reject me.
56. T F I don't function well on my own.
57. T F I feel I shouldn't have to accept some of the limitations placed on ordinary people.
58. T F People don't usually include me in what they're doing.
59. T F Most people can't be trusted.
60. T F Failure is very upsetting to me.
61. T F I count for something in the world.
62. T F I can take care of myself and my loved ones.
63. T F I can learn new skills if I try.
64. T F I can usually control my feelings.
65. T F I can get the care and attention I need.
66. T F I like to spend time by myself.

67. T F Most of the time I feel fairly treated.
68. T F My hopes and dreams are much like everyone else's.
69. T F I give people the benefit of the doubt.
70. T F I'm not perfect and that's OK.
71. T F I'm unattractive.
72. T F I choose my old, familiar ways of doing things over risking the unexpected.
73. T F I don't perform well under stress.
74. T F I'm powerless to change many of the situations I'm in.
75. T F There's no one I can count on for support and advice.
76. T F I try hard to please others, and I put their needs before my own.
77. T F I tend to expect the worst.
78. T F Sometimes I feel like an alien, very different from everybody else.
79. T F I must be on my guard against others' lies and hostile remarks.
80. T F I push myself so hard that I harm my relationships, my health, or my happiness.
81. T F People I like and respect often like and respect me.
82. T F I don't worry much about health or money.

83. T F Most of my decisions are sound.
84. T F I can take charge when I need to.
85. T F I can depend on my friends for advice and emotional support.
86. T F I think for myself, I can stand up for my ideas.
87. T F I'm treated fairly most of the time.
88. T F I could change jobs or join a club and soon fit in.
89. T F I'd rather be too gullible than too suspicious.
90. T F It's OK to make mistakes.
91. T F I don't deserve much attention or respect.
92. T F I feel uneasy when I go very far from home alone.
93. T F I mess up everything I attempt.
94. T F I'm often a victim of circumstances.
95. T F I have no one who hugs me, shares secrets with me, or really cares what happens to me.
96. T F I have trouble making my own wants and needs known.
97. T F Although my life is objectively OK, I have a lot of trouble accepting some parts that aren't the way I'd like them to be.
98. T F I don't feel I belong where I am.

99. T F Most people will break their promises and lie.
100. T F I have very clear, black-and-white rules for myself.

Scoring

This inventory assesses your core beliefs about the ten topics listed below. These topics are important areas of every-one's life, about which everyone has some sort of belief, whether it's conscious or not.

To score your answers, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Value

Look at your answers for items 1, 21, 41, 61, and 81. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 11, 31, 51, 71, and 91. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am worthy." The higher your score, the more valuable you believe you are as a person.

2. Security

Look at your answers for items 2, 22, 42, 62, and 82. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 12, 32, 52, 72, and 92. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am safe." The higher your score, the more safe you feel.

3. Performance

Look at your answers for items 3, 23, 43, 63, and 83. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 13, 33, 53, 73, and 93. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am competent." The higher your score, the more competent you feel.

4. Control

Look at your answers for items 4, 24, 44, 64, and 84. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 14, 34, 54, 74, and 94. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am powerful." The higher your score, the more you feel in control of your life.

5. Love

Look at your answers for items 5, 25, 45, 65, and 85. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 15, 35, 55, 75, and 95. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am loved." The higher your score, the more you feel nurtured.

6. Autonomy

Look at your answers for items 6, 26, 46, 66, and 86. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 16, 36, 56, 76, and 96. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am autonomous." The higher your score, the more independent you feel.

7. Justice

Look at your answers for items 7, 27, 47, 67, and 87. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 17, 37, 57, 77, and 97. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am treated justly." The higher your score, the more likely you are to accept what you get in life as fair or reasonable.

8. Belonging _____ points

Look at your answers for items 8, 28, 48, 68, and 88. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 18, 38, 58, 78, and 98. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total score in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I belong." The higher your score, the more you feel secure and connected to family, friends, acquaintances, and humanity in general.

9. Others _____ points

Look at your answers for items 9, 29, 49, 69, and 89. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 19, 39, 59, 79, and 99. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total score in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "People are good." The higher your score, the more likely you are to trust others and to expect them to behave positively towards you.

10. Standards _____ points

Look at your answers for items 10, 30, 50, 70, and 90. For each T circled, give yourself one point.

Now look at your answers for items 20, 40, 60, 80, and 100. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above.

On a scale of one to ten, this indicates how much you agree with the statement "My standards are reasonable and flexible."

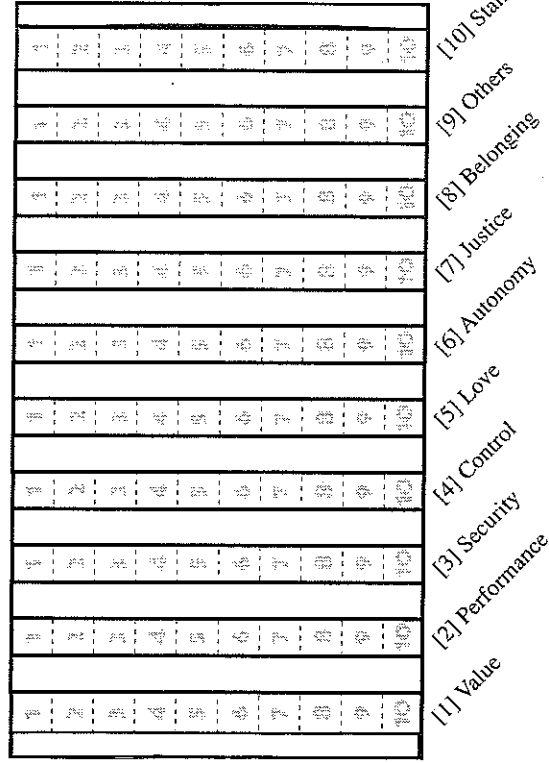
The higher your score, the more likely you are to judge your own and others' actions compassionately.

To get a quick overview of your scores, you can fill in the bar chart on the following page. Color in each bar, starting at the bottom, and extending up to your score for that category.

Interpreting Your Scores

It's tempting to visualize the bars on this chart as the bars of a prison. The higher the bars, the more confined and restricted by your beliefs you may feel. The lower the bars, the more freedom and choices you may have in life.

But the Core Belief Inventory is just a guideline. It's designed to help you start to identify your core beliefs, not to pass judgment on them or on yourself. The inventory reveals how you see yourself in the world, based on your experiences. The result isn't good or bad.



People who score high in agreement with the ten basic belief statements may tend to have a greater sense of well-being than those who score low. But right now that isn't the point. What matters is getting an honest sense of what you have come to believe about yourself.

So take this inventory with several grains of salt. Use it to find out where you stand on these core questions, but don't beat yourself up about your results. You believe what you believe. It is literally true for you at this moment, and you can't just decide to believe something else because it will give you a "better" score.

Likewise, don't get stuck in the idea that there are exactly ten possible core beliefs. Ten is just a convenient number. It makes the inventory work neatly. But you could make a strong case for love and belonging being such similar issues that they're part of the same belief. Or you could say that safety and the good or evil nature of others are part of the same belief about how vulnerable you are. And we have undoubtedly left out some belief that is very important to you. For example, in planning this book, we chose early on not to cover beliefs about the existence of God, spirituality, the afterlife, and so on.

The diary techniques that follow will help you refine your core belief statements and explore some that the inventory may not have elicited.

Monologue Diary

In a way, this exercise "sneaks up" on core beliefs by starting with something that is more self-evident: your feelings in a given situation.

Do this exercise for at least a week. During that week, pay special attention to any painful emotions such as anxiety, guilt, depression, embarrassment, or anger. As soon as possible after you notice a painful emotion, write down the feeling, the situation, and what you were saying to yourself in your internal

monologue just before you felt bad. Use the three-column format shown below.

<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Situation</i>	<i>Monologue</i>
Here's an example of a diary completed by Lilly, a medical transcriptionist, during the first month of night school, where she was studying accounting and bookkeeping. She hoped to get a better job doing bookkeeping and eventually get a degree in business administration.		
Nervous, scared	Waiting for teacher to pass out first quiz	"I can't do this."
Depressed	Reading assignment	"Dense"
Sad, let down, irritated	Talking to Sherri on the phone about job possibilities	(Just an image of her smiling and shaking her head the way she does.)
Dis-couraged, hopeless	Getting a "C" on the first quiz	"I barely passed the easy part. I'll never finish this. It's hopeless."
Furious	When John said I was wasting my time	"He doesn't care about me."
Anxious, agitated	Trying to get out of work on time and get to class	"Late...flunk...awful."
Sad, crying	Trying to complete balance sheet problems at two a.m.	"I'm nothing, never will be anything."

Anxious Waiting to ask the financial aid people if I qualify
 (Rehearsing my lines, seeing them smile sadly and shake their heads.)

Notice how Lilly had trouble identifying some of her monologues. Sometimes she could only remember a single word or a mental image. This is very common. If this happens to you, you can expand on what you remember by using your imagination.

To use your imagination to remember monologues, lie down in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for five minutes. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Try to consciously relax every muscle in your body and put your cares aside for this moment. In your mind's eye, see yourself reliving the particular situation from your diary. See the situation as if it were a movie, but run it in slow motion. Imagine that an announcer is doing a "voice-over" commentary on the action, providing you with the missing monologue.

For example, before going to sleep one night, Lilly visualized herself preparing for her visit to the financial aid office. She saw herself waiting in the hall, getting up nerve to go in. She slowed the scene down by concentrating on the fine details: the two-toned green institutional paint, the smell of dust and disinfectant, the flickering fluorescent lights, the hum of classes going on behind closed doors. As she saw the scene in her mind, she heard her own voice whispering: "They'll smile and be nice, but they'll say no. They really think I'm just a silly woman. Just silly Lilly, like my Dad always said. Off on another harebrained scheme. This will never work. Why should they help me?"

Lilly also used visualization to relieve the scene with her friend on the telephone. She found that her mental image of her friend's face translated into these thoughts: "She thinks I'm chasing rainbows again. She's just too nice to say so. She senses my self-doubt and secretly agrees that I'll never get a better job." And the slow motion version of "Late...flunk...awful" was a predictable "I'm going to be late. The teacher will think I don't care and flunk me out. This is awful. I can't stand it."

Work on your own diary entries until you have a big crop of feelings, situations, and monologues. The more you practice this exercise, the better you will get at tuning into your monologues and seeing how they can cause those painful feelings that previously seemed to "flare up" out of nowhere.

It's exciting to learn how to uncover your monologues, but even more fascinating is what you can do with the material from your diary once you have at least a week's worth of material to work with. The next two exercises will show you how to discover your core beliefs by analyzing your negative monologues and the situations in which they typically occur.

Laddering

Laddering is a way of analyzing your monologue statements, looking for more and more basic underlying assumptions and predictions, until you arrive at statements of core belief. The technique is called laddering because it proceeds step by step, like descending a ladder rung by rung.

Laddering has only two rules. Rule one is to question yourself by using this format: "What if _____? What does that mean to me?" In the blank space, you write a self-statement from your internal monologue. Then you write the answer to the question "What does that mean to me?" Next, you start over, using your answer to fill in the blank. Here's how Lilly did it with one of her monologues:

I barely passed the easy part.

What if I barely passed the easy part? What does that mean to me?

It means when the material gets harder I'll flunk out.

What if I flunk out? What does that mean to me?

It means I won't get my degree.

What if I don't get my degree, what does that mean to me?

It means I can't improve myself, I'm stuck being a glorified typist.

What if I'm stuck being a typist? What does that mean to me?

It means I'll stay poor.

What if I stay poor? What does that mean to me?

It means I'm not competent.

What if I'm incompetent? What does that mean to me?

It means just that — I'm incompetent to do what I want to do.

At this point, Lilly could go no further. Whenever she asked herself what being incompetent meant, she just thought it was self-evident. It was the basic statement beneath her unhappiness: that she was just not competent to do the things she wanted to do.

Here's another example of Lilly's ladderding:

He doesn't care about me.

What if he doesn't care about me? What does that mean to me?

It means I'm not very important.

What if I'm not very important? What does that mean to me?

It means I have no value.

What if I have no value. What does that mean to me?

It means I'm worthless.

What if I'm worthless? What does that mean to me?

It means I have no worth.

In this case, Lilly "hit bottom" quickly. The horrible judgment "I'm worthless" summed up everything that lay beneath her feelings of not being cared for by people: she wasn't cared for because she wasn't worth anyone's care.

When you try ladderding, look out for rule number two: don't answer with a feeling. It's common to resort to feelings instead of self-statements in this exercise. For example, "What does being poor mean to me?" might be answered "I'll be miserably unhappy." But that kind of feeling statement leads nowhere. Keep your answers confined to statements that express conclusions or beliefs or assumptions...not descriptions of feelings.

Theme Analysis

This is another way to use your diary material to uncover core beliefs. It involves looking not at the monologues but at the situations themselves. You analyze the situations, looking for common themes that connect them.

Rudy was a pastry chef who was keeping his diary to try to figure out why he felt so guilty and inadequate in his relationship with his girlfriend, Gloria. Here are the situations he listed in his diary:

Coming home later than I said I would

Forgetting our six months' anniversary

When Gloria asked me not to be so rough in lovemaking

Buying her the ring that was too large

Discussing where to go over Labor Day

The flat tire on the way to her mother's house

Making a tactless remark about her best friend

Too much almond paste in her birthday cake

Looking at just the situations, Rudy saw a theme emerging: he couldn't bear to make mistakes around Gloria. Any deviation from perfection destroyed his image of himself as the perfect lover and companion, and somehow stole his enjoyment of their time together. He realized that he had very rigid standards about how to love someone.

Linda was a physical therapist who remained depressed even though she had a well-paying job, good health, and a stable relationship. Looking at the situations she found depressing was very informative:

The annual evaluation at work, even though it was positive

Receiving birthday presents

A friend being diagnosed as having breast cancer

Looking into the mirror and deciding I look weird

Having to ask my boss for a favor

Being asked to present in-service training at the hospital

Having to be stern with patients who haven't done their exercises

My husband saying "I love you"

A disagreement over scheduling at work

Discussing a move to a newer, nicer apartment

At first, these situations seemed to have little in common. Some were at work, some were at home, some were by herself, some were with others. She felt she was "crazy" because events that would make most people happy frequently made her feel sad, out of place, an undeserving impostor.

The sense of being an impostor, of being undeserving, finally showed Linda the common theme: all the problem situations were ones in which attention was focused on her. In each case, she was being judged or compared or honored or criticized. Even birthday presents and declarations of love were painful because she didn't feel she deserved them. At her core, she didn't believe that she was worthy of any attention, any honor, any love. Her core belief that robbed normally happy experiences of all pleasure was a belief in her own worthlessness.

Theme analysis can also be done directly on your monologue statements. For instance, this is a summary of Hilary's typical internal monologue while at work running her restaurant:

There goes Tony, sneaking out back again. Probably smoking dope back by the trash bins. Got to keep an eye on him... That guy at table six looks shifty and nervous. Bet he tries to beat the check...Running late, got to find time to inventory the meat locker. Is the chef in cahoots with the butcher? Must be over-ordering and grabbing kickbacks, cheating me... Marcy should have been back from her break by now. She's so lazy.

Laddering down isn't necessary here. The theme emerges readily as you spot key words: *sneaking...keep an eye on...shifty, beat the check...in cahoots...kickbacks...cheating...lazy*. Hilary obviously believes that other people are not to be trusted, that they

are out to cheat her, and that she must be constantly vigilant or else she'll be taken advantage of.

When you have identified your major core beliefs, you'll be ready for the next step — analyzing the consequences of your beliefs. In the next chapter, you'll explore both the positive and negative effects your beliefs have on your mood, your relationships, your work, and every other area of your life.