

# THE MISTAKEN BELIEFS WORKBOOK

**Mistaken beliefs are where negative self-talk stems from. They are deep rooted beliefs or assumptions that we hold about ourselves, other people and life in general.**

Most often, such beliefs are incorrect and completely unhelpful. We usually learn these beliefs from our parents, peers, teachers, and the larger society that we grew up in. Most people tend to take these beliefs for granted and don't even realise that they're beliefs at all. We just assume that they are true!

## **Examples of mistaken beliefs...**

- 'Life is a constant struggle.'
- 'I should always act nice no matter how I'm feeling.'
- 'I am nothing unless other people love and approve of me.'
- 'I am not important. My feelings and needs are not important.'
- 'I can't cope with scary or difficult situations.'

Mistaken beliefs that you hold about yourself and 'the way life is' are the root cause of the anxiety you experience. Choosing to let go of such beliefs will help you to feel less worried, stressed and unhappy.

## **Mistaken beliefs hold us back from the things we want in life. For example:**

- 'I can't afford to have what I want.'
- 'I don't have time.'
- 'I don't have the talent.'

At an even deeper level, 'I don't deserve to have the things I truly want.' Believing this means that you won't even try to get what you want, which is actually the surest way to guarantee that you won't!

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## **Mistaken beliefs set limits on your self-worth...**

Mistaken beliefs are usually based on the idea that self-worth depends on something outside of ourselves, for example, material possessions, social status, wealth, the love or approval of another person.

Believing that 'my worth depends on the things I achieve' or that 'success is everything' places your self-worth outside of you and prevents you from realising that you have many qualities and talents regardless of your outer achievements.

As your self-esteem develops, you will learn to respect and believe in yourself aside from the things you've achieved and without being dependent on anyone else to feel secure within yourself.

## **Discover your own mistaken beliefs**

We have all developed our own set of mistaken beliefs through hearing direct messages from other people such as 'nice girls don't get angry' or through our reactions to being criticised by other people (for example - 'I am worthless'), ignored by others (for example - 'my needs don't matter') or being rejected by others (for example - 'I'm unlovable').

Unfortunately, what tends to happen is in holding these beliefs we act in ways (and as result others to treat us in a way) that confirms them (this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy).

It's crucial that we understand how our own set of mistaken beliefs came about before we can go about reprogramming ourselves with more functional and supportive beliefs.

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## Examples of mistaken beliefs and counter-statements:

1) I am powerless. I am a victim of outside circumstances.

**Counter Statement:** I am responsible for myself, and I'm in control of my life. I can't determine the circumstances, but I can determine my attitude toward them.

2) If I take a risk, I will fail. If I fail, other people will reject me.

**Counter Statement:** It's alright for me to take risks and it doesn't matter if I fail – I can learn from every mistake I make. It's okay for me to be successful.

3) Life is a constant struggle. There must be something wrong if life seems easy, pleasurable or fun.

**Counter Statement:** Life is pleasurable and full. It's alright for me to relax and enjoy myself. Life is an adventure in which I'm learning to accept both the ups and the downs.

4) I am not important. My feelings and needs are not important.

**Counter Statement:** I'm a unique and valuable individual. My needs and my feelings are just as important as anyone else.

NOTES:

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## Five questions to ask yourself to challenge your mistaken beliefs

- 1) What is the evidence that supports this belief? If I look objectively at all of my life experiences, what is the evidence that this belief is true?
- 2) Is this belief always true for me?
- 3) Does this belief consider the whole picture? Does it take into consideration both the positive and negative ramifications?
- 4) Does this belief encourage my own peace of mind and well-being?
- 5) Did I choose this belief or has it developed from the influence of my family/friends as I was growing up?

Remember that whatever value these mistaken beliefs may have offered you in the past, they no longer offer you and only serve to create stress and anxiety for you now.

## Self-Reflection Exercise

**Take 5-10 minutes to reflect and consider any mistaken beliefs that you may be holding on to. Work through the following questions and then consider what counter statements you could use to begin changing this belief today.**

**My Mistaken Belief:**

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