

# **Core Beliefs, Expectations and Rules For Living**

## **Core Beliefs**

Core beliefs are our most deeply ingrained and unconscious assumptions about ourselves, others and the world. They act as psychological filters that shape how we interpret daily events, driving our emotions, decisions and expectations of what life has in store for us. These assumptions are often formed during early childhood from the care we received as children from our parents and caregivers. If our early experiences were positive and nurturing our core beliefs will be self-affirming and positive. If our early experiences were toxic and threatening our core beliefs will be self-limiting and negative. The following are some examples of positive and negative core beliefs:

### **Beliefs about self**

I am lovable or I am unlovable. I am competent or I am a failure. I am clever or I am stupid. I am worthy or I am unworthy. I can cope or I cannot cope.

### **Beliefs about others**

People are trustworthy or people cannot be trusted. People are safe or people are dangerous. People are kind or people are mean.

### **Beliefs about the world**

The world is nurturing or the world is threatening. The world is safe or the world is dangerous. The world is opportunity or the world is oppression.

## **Expectations**

Expectations are predictions about what will happen in the future based on your past experiences and core beliefs. Expectations can be realistic or unrealistic. When expectations are rigid or inaccurate, they can contribute to disappointment, anxiety or conflict.

## **Rules for Living**

Our core beliefs shape our expectations of how life is going to be and translate into our rules for living. Rules for living are the guidelines you follow to protect yourself or achieve your goals.

### **Core Belief→Expectation→Rule For Living**

The world is a dangerous place. The worst is going to happen. I must avoid taking risks.

I am competent. I will be able to cope. Take opportunities for self-enhancement.

I'm not good enough. If I make one mistake, people will reject me. I must be perfect.

People can't be trusted. Others will eventually let me down. Never rely on anyone.

I am capable. Practice will help me improve. Keep trying when things are difficult.

## **Limiting Core Beliefs**

Limiting core beliefs feel like absolute facts rather than the absence of acceptance, understanding and positive regard from parents and caregivers in childhood. They create self-fulfilling prophecies. We tend to notice evidence that confirms our limiting beliefs

(confirmation bias) while ignoring facts that contradict them. By actively examining and challenging these assumptions through conscious awareness or working with a therapist, it is possible to reframe limiting beliefs into balanced and empowering alternatives.

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