

CORE, INTERMEDIATE, AND LIMITING BELIEFS

The Blueprint of Your Mind

Introduction: The Lens Through Which You See the World

Imagine you're wearing a pair of tinted glasses, and you don't even realize it. These glasses subtly color everything you see, shaping your reality without your conscious awareness. Now, what if I told you that these "glasses" represent your **beliefs**—the invisible filters through which you interpret life, make decisions, and interact with others?

Your beliefs dictate what you think is possible, how you feel about yourself, and even how you behave. Some beliefs **empower** you, while others **limit** you. In psychology and NLP, we classify beliefs into three levels:

1. **Core Beliefs** – Deep-seated beliefs that form your identity and perception of the world.
2. **Intermediate Beliefs** – The rules and assumptions that guide your behavior and decision-making.
3. **Limiting Beliefs** – Self-imposed restrictions that prevent you from reaching your full potential.

Let's dive deeper into each of these levels with real-life examples.

1. Core Beliefs: The Deepest Truths You Hold

What Are Core Beliefs?

Core beliefs are the fundamental and deeply ingrained beliefs we have about **ourselves, others, and the world**. These are often formed in early childhood, shaped by experiences, parental influence, culture, and society. Core beliefs act as a **mental blueprint**, determining how we see everything in life.

Characteristics of Core Beliefs

- ✓ **Unconscious:** We rarely question them because we assume they are absolute truths.
- ✓ **Influence Identity:** They shape how we define ourselves and others.
- ✓ **Hard to Change:** Because they form early, they require conscious effort to modify.

Examples of Core Beliefs

◆ Positive Core Beliefs:

- ✓ "I am worthy of love and success."
- ✓ "I can handle challenges and adapt."
- ✓ "People are generally kind and supportive."

◆ Negative Core Beliefs (Limiting Core Beliefs):

- ✗ "I am not good enough."
- ✗ "The world is unsafe, and I must always be on guard."
- ✗ "People will always hurt or betray me."

Case Study: Sarah's Core Belief

Sarah grew up in a home where she was constantly criticized for her ideas. Over time, she developed the **core belief**: *"My voice doesn't matter."*

- ▼ **Effects:** As an adult, she avoids speaking up in meetings, doubts her opinions, and struggles with self-worth.

💡 How to Change a Core Belief

1. **Identify It:** Ask, *What do I believe about myself that holds me back?*
 2. **Challenge It:** Look for evidence that contradicts this belief.
 3. **Reframe It:** Replace it with a **more empowering belief**, e.g., *"My ideas are valuable, and I deserve to be heard."*
 4. **Take Small Actions:** Speak up in safe environments to reinforce the new belief.
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2. Intermediate Beliefs: The Rules That Govern Your Life

What Are Intermediate Beliefs?

Intermediate beliefs act as **rules, assumptions, and expectations** that guide how we behave based on our core beliefs. These beliefs shape how we navigate life, influencing our **decision-making, relationships, and actions**.

Characteristics of Intermediate Beliefs

- ✓ **If-Then Thinking:** These beliefs are often conditional (e.g., *"If I work hard, I will be successful."*).
- ✓ **Influence Everyday Behavior:** They shape our habits and routines.
- ✓ **Can Be Rigid or Flexible:** Some are helpful, while others limit us.

Examples of Intermediate Beliefs

◆ Positive Intermediate Beliefs:

- ✓ "If I listen carefully, people will respect my opinion."
- ✓ "If I put in effort, I will achieve my goals."

◆ Limiting Intermediate Beliefs:

- ✗ "If I make a mistake, people will think I'm incompetent."
- ✗ "If I open up emotionally, people will take advantage of me."

Case Study: Omar's Intermediate Belief

Omar was raised in a strict household where mistakes were heavily punished. His **core belief** became: *"Failure is unacceptable."*

▼ **Intermediate Belief Formed:** *"If I don't do things perfectly, people will judge me."*

▼ **Effects:** Omar procrastinates on tasks, fearing imperfection.

💡 How to Change an Intermediate Belief

1. **Recognize the Rule:** Ask, *What rule do I follow that makes me feel stuck?*
 2. **Question Its Validity:** *Is this rule always true?*
 3. **Replace with a Flexible Alternative:** E.g., instead of *"I must be perfect,"* try *"I can grow through mistakes."*
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3. Limiting Beliefs: The Mental Handcuffs Holding You Back

What Are Limiting Beliefs?

Limiting beliefs are **negative assumptions or thoughts** that hold us back from pursuing our goals, expressing ourselves, or embracing opportunities.

Characteristics of Limiting Beliefs

- ✓ **Self-Defeating:** They prevent growth and progress.
- ✓ **Fear-Based:** Often rooted in past failures or societal conditioning.
- ✓ **Unconscious Yet Controlling:** Many don't realize these beliefs are shaping their reality.

Examples of Limiting Beliefs

- ✗ "I'm too old to start something new."
- ✗ "I'll never be successful because I'm not smart enough."
- ✗ "Love is not meant for me."

Case Study: Ahmed's Limiting Belief

Ahmed has always dreamed of starting a business. However, he constantly tells himself: *"I'm not good at handling money, so I'll never succeed."*

▼ **Effect:** He never takes the first step, reinforcing his belief.

💡 How to Overcome Limiting Beliefs

1. **Identify Them:** What's the story you keep telling yourself?
2. **Challenge Them:** Is this belief based on facts or fear?
3. **Rewrite the Narrative:** Instead of *"I can't manage money,"* say *"I can learn financial skills."*
4. **Take Small Proof Actions:** Start with a small financial step to build confidence.

How These Beliefs Work Together: A Real-Life Example

Scenario: Public Speaking Anxiety

Imagine you're asked to give a presentation. Your **belief system** plays a crucial role in your response:

- ◆ **Core Belief:** "I am not good enough."
- ◆ **Intermediate Belief:** "If I make a mistake, people will laugh at me."
- ◆ **Limiting Belief:** "I can't speak in public because I'll embarrass myself."

💡 **Outcome?** You avoid public speaking, reinforcing the original belief that you're not good enough.

Reprogramming Your Beliefs: The NLP Approach

Techniques to Transform Beliefs

- ✂ **1. Identify the Source** – Trace back where the belief came from.
 - ✂ **2. Challenge Negative Beliefs** – Find contradictions and alternative perspectives.
 - ✂ **3. Reframe & Replace** – Swap limiting beliefs for empowering ones.
 - ✂ **4. Use NLP Techniques** –
 - ✓ **Anchoring:** Associate confidence with a physical trigger.
 - ✓ **Visualization:** Imagine yourself succeeding.
 - ✓ **Pattern Interrupts:** Break negative self-talk cycles.
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Conclusion: You Are Not Your Beliefs

Your beliefs **shape your world**, but they are **not set in stone**. The good news? You can **reprogram your subconscious mind** to support your growth.

- ◆ **Limiting Beliefs = Mental Barriers** 🛑
- ◆ **Intermediate Beliefs = Rules That Can Change** 🔄
- ◆ **Core Beliefs = Your Deepest Truths (But They're Not Permanent!)** 🌱

💡 **Final Thought:** *"The only thing standing between you and the life you want is the story you keep telling yourself. Change the story, change your life."* 🚀