



The Healing Collective

THE DOWNWARD ARROW CORE BELIEF TECHNIQUE

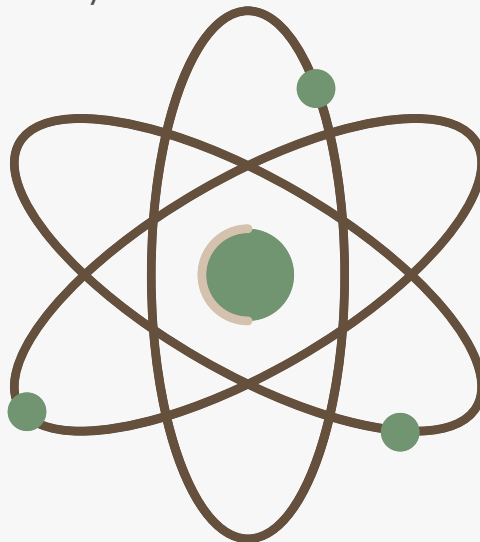
'Core beliefs' are a person's enduring, fundamental beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them. Core beliefs are not always negative, however, those that are can be problematic. Core beliefs are characterized by a number of factors:

- They are often developed early in life, as a result of childhood experience. They can however, change later in life, for example, as a result of adult trauma.
- They may exist out of conscious awareness.
- They can be exhibited through absolute statements and assumptions such as 'the world is a bad place'.

Because these beliefs are held deeply, at someone's 'core', they may not be particularly aware of them. The downward arrow technique is a Socratic questioning method that can help to identify problematic core beliefs. At step 3, choose one of the following questions to ask yourself

Questions To Ask Yourself

1. What does this negative thought mean?
2. What does this negative thought mean about you?
3. What does this negative thought mean about others
4. What does this negative thought mean about the world?
5. If this is true, why does it bother you?
6. If this is true, why is it so bad?
7. If this is true what does it mean for your future?





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1

Identify a situation bringing up negative emotions

E.g. An upcoming university exam which brings about anxiety

2

Write down what thoughts accompany this situation and your feelings

E.g. I'm definitely going to fail this exam

3

What does this negative thought mean? (Or a question from the list)

E.g. My parents will be disappointed in me again, like always

4

What does this negative thought mean about you?

E.g. I'm a failure



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CORE BELIEFS COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT) FORMULATION

Situation:

Thought:

Emotion:

What is the underpinning theme behind this thought?



Possible core belief:

Coping strategies:



Significant event:

Core belief established:

Coping strategy for event:



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CORE BELIEFS COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (CBT) FORMULATION (Annotated)

Situation: *Spent an hour writing a draft, but it was never good enough. Threw it away.*

Thought: *"I'm never going to be published."*

Emotion: *Hopelessness, despair, rejection*

What is the underpinning theme behind this thought? *"My writing is not good enough for other people."*



Possible core belief: *I'm a bad writer.*

Coping strategies: *Attend and graduate from evening writing classes
Share my work with more publications*



Significant event: *Submitted an article to the New York Times and was rejected.*

Core belief established: *I'm a bad writer, so nobody will ever want to read my work.*

Coping strategy for the event: *Threw away work, took a year-long hiatus from writing.*



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CORE BELIEFS WORKSHEET 1

Core beliefs are our most deeply held assumptions about ourselves, the world, and others. They are firmly embedded in our thinking, and significantly shape our reality and behaviors. Yet, as the name suggests, core beliefs are precisely that – beliefs rather than facts. Based on childhood assessments, they are often untrue. They are also self-perpetuating. Like magnets, they attract evidence that makes them stronger, and they repel anything that might challenge them. But the good news is that it is possible to change them.

1. Please complete the statements below. Do not spend a long time thinking about them; simply write what comes into your head.

I am _____

Other people are _____

The world is _____

2. Now think about these three statements. How do they make you feel? When did you first become aware of these beliefs? Which experiences shaped them? Who in your life may hold similar views?



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CORE BELIEFS WORKSHEET 1

3. Ask yourself: Do these beliefs still serve me? If not, which beliefs would be more constructive? Write down three beliefs about yourself, other people, and the world which you would like to cultivate going forward:

I am _____

Other people are _____

The world is _____

4. Whenever you become aware that the old core beliefs colour your thinking and interpretations of the world, recall their origins and that they no longer serve you. Try instead to remember your new core beliefs. How would you interpret an event or situation if you viewed it through the lens of your new beliefs?



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CORE BELIEFS WORKSHEET 2

Common negative core beliefs about ourselves tend to fall into three categories: helplessness, unlovability, and worthlessness. This exercise is designed to identify your negative core beliefs about yourself. Tick the boxes that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/>	I am helpless.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am incompetent.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I feel vulnerable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not loveable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am inferior.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am not likeable.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I believe that my relationships will not last.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am unworthy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am bad.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am stupid.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am a burden to others.