

INTERNALIZED MESSAGES: WHOSE BELIEF IS THIS?

QUESTION THE MESSAGE BEFORE YOU TURN IT AGAINST YOURSELF

Some painful beliefs are learned from repeated stereotypes, discrimination, family messages, media, institutions, or pressure to fit a dominant standard.

NAME THE MESSAGE

- 'People like me are...' 'I have to be twice as good...' 'My accent makes me sound...' 'My skin/hair/name is...'
- Write the message exactly enough to examine it.

WHERE DID I LEARN IT?

- Family? School? Media? Workplace? Religion? Peers? Racism? Colorism? Ableism? Classism? Colonial history?
- A repeated message can feel familiar without being true.

WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS BELIEF?

- Does the belief keep you quiet, overworking, apologizing, hiding, tolerating mistreatment, or distancing from your own community?
- Does it measure worth by someone else's standard?

LOOK FOR COUNTER-EVIDENCE

- What does your lived experience show?
- What do people from your community say about this trait or identity?
- Whose life, art, scholarship, leadership, caregiving, or resistance challenges the stereotype?

BUILD A BELIEVABLE REFRAME

- Avoid forced positivity.
- Try: 'I learned to judge this part of myself because it was judged around me. I can decide what it means to me now.'
- Or: 'This barrier is real; it is not evidence that I am inferior.'

PRACTICE THROUGH ACTION

- Use your name correctly. Wear or style what feels authentic. Speak your language. Ask for access. Join community. Rest without proving worth.
- Choose actions that help the new belief become lived evidence.

Before changing yourself, ask whether the belief was ever truly yours.