

BUILDING BALANCED CORE BELIEFS

WHEN AN OLD BELIEF IS HARD TO LET GO

* CORE BELIEFS CAN FEEL LIKE FACTS

- A core belief is a deeply held idea about yourself, other people, or the world.
- Painful beliefs may grow from criticism, trauma, rejection, discrimination, or unmet needs.
- A belief can feel completely true without being the complete truth.

* USE A BRIDGE - NOT A LEAP

- Do not force yourself to repeat a positive statement that feels impossible.
- Begin with a fair thought: "One mistake does not define my whole life."
- Try: "I do not fully believe the new thought yet, but I am willing to consider it."

* I AM A FAILURE

- What happened: "I failed this test." The old belief turns one event into an identity.
- Balanced view: My overall grade in this class and my grades in other classes are good.
- Reframe: This test may lower my score, but it does not erase what I have done well. I can study earlier, practice consistently, ask for help, or work with a tutor.
- More examples: A job rejection does not erase my skills. A mistake as a parent or partner does not erase every caring choice I have made. A goal taking longer than planned does not mean I cannot reach it.

* I AM WORTHLESS

- Feeling worthless may become stronger after rejection, criticism, or overwhelm.
- Reframe: My worth is not something I must earn through productivity, appearance, perfection, or approval.
- I have value because I am a person. I deserve dignity, respect, and safety.
- More examples: Being unemployed, ill, dependent on help, or unable to finish everything does not remove my value. Someone treating me poorly is evidence about their behavior - not my worth.

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* I AM A BURDEN

- Needing care, patience, reassurance, accommodations, or help does not make a person a burden.
- Reframe: Relationships include both giving and receiving. I can name my needs, respect other people's limits, and receive appropriate support without shaming myself.
- More examples: Asking for a ride, help with a task, listening, or time to recover is not the same as demanding unlimited care. I have supported others, and I am allowed to receive support too.

* NOTHING I DO IS GOOD ENOUGH

- Some people, situations, or standards may leave me feeling that nothing is enough.
- Reframe: I can use fair, realistic standards. I can learn from feedback without treating every criticism as proof that I failed.
- My effort, progress, and limits matter.
- More examples: A meal can nourish people without being perfect. A completed task can be useful without being flawless. I can improve one part without dismissing everything I did well.

* I AM UGLY OR FAT

- My body may change because of age, illness, pregnancy, medication, disability, stress, or life experience.
- Reframe: My appearance does not determine my human worth.
- My body deserves nourishment, care, safety, and respect. I can pursue health or personal goals without bullying myself.
- More examples: An unflattering photo, clothing size, scar, wrinkle, or change in weight does not define my whole appearance. I can notice features I appreciate and qualities that have nothing to do with looks.

* NO MAN WOULD EVER LOVE ME

- Rejection, betrayal, abuse, or loneliness may make future love feel impossible.
- Reframe: One person's treatment of me does not predict how everyone will treat me.
- I can build a life grounded in self-respect and choose relationships with care, honesty, consent, and safety. I am worthy of healthy love.
- More examples: A breakup means one relationship ended - not that I am unlovable. Someone being unable or unwilling to love me well does not mean healthy love is unavailable to me.

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* I MUST BE PERFECT TO BELONG

- Perfection may once have helped me avoid criticism, punishment, or rejection.
- Reframe: I do not need to perform perfectly to deserve belonging.
- Safe people allow room for mistakes, differences, growth, and repair. I can be imperfect and still worthy of connection.
- More examples: I can stumble over my words, say no, have different interests, or need extra time and still belong. The right people do not require me to hide every vulnerable part of myself.

* MY FAMILY WOULD BE BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME

- Depression, shame, pain, or exhaustion can make this thought feel true. A painful thought is not proof.
- Reframe: My pain deserves support. My presence matters, even when I cannot feel that right now.
- More examples: Needing help, having less energy, or struggling financially does not mean my family would be better without me. People may prefer helping me through a hard season over losing me.
- Tell a safe person. If you may hurt yourself or cannot stay safe, call or text 988, call emergency services, or go to an emergency department.

* I MUST ALWAYS BE IN CONTROL

- Control may have helped me survive chaos, uncertainty, betrayal, or danger.
- Reframe: I can prepare, set boundaries, and make thoughtful choices without controlling every person or outcome.
- I can cope with some uncertainty. Asking for help does not make me weak.
- More examples: I can make a backup plan without checking everything repeatedly. I can let another capable person complete a task differently. I can pause before trying to fix someone else's feelings.

* I HAVE CHANGED AND FEEL LOST

- Trauma, grief, illness, caregiving, or stress can change how I think, feel, relate, and function.
- Reframe: I may not return to exactly who I was before. I can reconnect with parts of myself that matter and discover who I am becoming.
- Healing may include grieving, adapting, remembering, and growing.
- More examples: I can bring back one old interest, routine, value, or relationship at a time. Needing a different pace does not mean the person I was has disappeared.

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* HELPFUL BELIEFS TO PRACTICE

- I am a good spouse, partner, parent, relative, or friend - even though I am imperfect.
- I can handle stress and solve problems one step at a time.
- I am intelligent in ways that matter. I can learn skills I do not have yet.
- I can cope with challenges. I have figured things out before.

* RESPECT, SAFETY, AND REPAIR

- I deserve respect. I deserve safety. My needs matter.
- I am worthy of relationships in which my "no" is respected.
- I can take responsibility without deciding that I am a terrible person.
- I can make a mistake, repair what I can, and keep growing.

* LET EXPERIENCE STRENGTHEN THE NEW BELIEF

- A new belief becomes stronger through repeated experiences - not through one perfect sentence.
- Each boundary, solved problem, accepted kindness, or repaired mistake offers new evidence.
- You do not have to believe the new thought completely before you begin practicing it.

* A GENTLE REMINDER

- Feelings are real and important, but they are not the only evidence.
- Ask: What supports the old belief? What does the old belief leave out?
- A balanced belief makes room for pain, strengths, context, choices, and hope.