

Psychoeducational Resources Website – Self-esteem

Alternative beliefs

When we experience low self-esteem, we may tend to dwell on thoughts and feelings that come from our negative core beliefs. These thoughts can flood the mind and leave little time to notice how we really are, and we fail to notice our positive qualities.

We know it is difficult to completely change negative core beliefs but what we do know is we are able to change how much we believe they are true. Negative core beliefs may not go away for good. This is *not because they are true*, it is simply because they have become deep-rooted in our minds.

The exercises below look at identifying and strengthening alternative, more positive beliefs about ourselves. The steps will be familiar to those who have completed the ‘Challenging core beliefs’ worksheet. Remember, this isn’t an exercise in positive thinking – you will be recording evidence and experiences that demonstrate positive things about you.

Step 1

Look at the evidence you wrote down in Step 4 of the first exercise. Carefully read through the statements and imagine you are reading about someone else, perhaps someone you care about. What conclusions do you come to about this person?

Or think about a recent time when you felt good or ok about yourself, take a moment to remember where you were, what could you see, hear, smell, taste and feel? Bring to mind how you were feeling at that time, any sensations in your body and thoughts going through your mind.

Now remember how you saw yourself as a person in that moment. *Be kind to yourself*, can you list these as “I am _____” statements?

Alternative Beliefs

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Some examples

“I am...”

- Worthy of respect
- Interesting
- Successful

Step 2

Choose one alternative belief to work on and list it below.

My alternative belief

Looking at the alternative belief, think about how much you believe that this alternative belief is true and put your thought down as a percentage here.

Right now, I believe this statement is true with about _____ per cent certainty.

Step 3

Use the space below and write down evidence and experience that support your alternative belief is true. Include past experiences you can recall as well as recent ones.

Remember, our minds like to work with evidence and experience that fits with our core-beliefs and for that reason you may find this difficult to do initially. Take your time. If you can, try asking someone you trust to suggest evidence.

Alternative Belief "I am _____"
Evidence and experiences that supports this belief
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Step 4

Can you put these alternative beliefs into practice?

Look at the alternative beliefs you have identified. What would you be *doing* differently if you believed it was true with a little more certainty?

Use the space below to list the things you might be doing differently if you really believed your new alternative beliefs were true. What would you be doing that you are not doing now?

Alternative belief:

I am _____

If I believed this was true with 100% certainty I would be doing:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

The purpose of this step is to start to think about and to act *as if* your alternative belief is true, even when you don't fully believe it is true. This may seem like an odd thing to do but by not doing so we give the behaviours attached to our negative core beliefs more chance to dominate our actions and thinking. It really isn't easy to do, there may even be thoughts popping into your mind right now that give you reasons why not to act as if your alternative belief is true, such as statements like "you'll only prove it isn't true." Try not to listen to these doubts – they stem from our negative core beliefs.

Choose just one thing that fits with your alternative belief and try just testing it out. What happens when you do? Have you noticed any new experiences or evidence you could add to alternative belief list now?

Step 5

Once you have spent some time gathering evidence and testing out some of your alternative belief actions, think about how much you believe your new belief now, has it changed?

I believe my alternative belief is true with about _____per cent certainty.

Has it changed the percentages of how strongly you believe any of your negative core beliefs even?

Remember

We can begin to overcome low self-esteem by challenging the accuracy of our negative core beliefs. Negative ideas about ourselves can *seem* true but they may not really *be* true. Overcome low self-esteem by noticing and evidencing alternative beliefs about yourself and keep building on those positive experiences.