

Below are some examples of fairly common mistaken beliefs that tend to influence many people. Following each are counterstatements that replace the negative belief with a positive one, much in the way negative self-talk was countered by positive self-statements in the preceding chapter. Positive statements that counter mistaken beliefs are known as *affirmations*.

- I'm powerless. I'm a victim of outside circumstances.

*I'm responsible and in control of my life. Circumstances are what they are, but I can determine my attitude toward them.*

- Life is a struggle. Something must be wrong if life seems too easy, pleasurable, or fun.

*Life is full and pleasurable.*

*It's okay for me to relax and have fun.*

*Life is an adventure—and I'm learning to accept both the ups and the downs.*

- If I take a risk, I'll fail. If I fail, others will reject me.

*It's okay for me to take risks.*

*It's okay to fail—I can learn a lot from every mistake.*

*It's okay for me to be a success.*

- I'm unimportant. My feelings and needs are unimportant.

*I am a valuable and unique person.*

*I deserve to have my feelings and needs taken care of as much as anyone else.*

- I always should look good and act nice, no matter how I feel.

*It's okay simply to be myself.*

- If I worry enough, this problem should get better or go away.

*Worrying has no effect on solving problems; taking action does.*

- I can't cope with difficult or scary situations.

*I can learn to handle any scary situation if I approach it slowly, in small enough steps.*

- The outside world is dangerous. There is safety only in what is known and familiar.

*I can learn to become more comfortable with the world outside. I look forward to new opportunities for learning and growth that the outside world can offer.*

Just recognizing your own particular mistaken beliefs is the first and most important step toward letting go of them. The second step is to develop a positive affirmation to counter each mistaken belief and continue to impress it on your mind until you are "deprogrammed."

What follows is a questionnaire that will help you to identify some of your own unconstructive beliefs. Rate each statement on a 1 to 4 scale, according to how much you think it influences your feelings and behavior. Then go back and check off the beliefs you rated 3 or 4.



### *Mistaken Beliefs Questionnaire*

How much does each of these unconstructive beliefs influence your feelings and behavior?  
Take your time to reflect about each belief.

1 = not at all	3 = strongly/frequently
2 = somewhat/sometimes	4 = very strongly

Place the appropriate number after each statement:

1. I feel powerless or helpless.
2. Often I feel like a victim of outside circumstances.
3. I don't have the money to do what I really want.
4. There is seldom enough time to do what I want.
5. Life is very difficult—it's a struggle.
6. If things are going well, watch out!
7. I feel unworthy. I feel that I'm not good enough.
8. Often I feel that I don't deserve to be successful or happy.
9. Often I feel a sense of defeat and resignation, a sense of "Why bother?"
10. My condition seems hopeless.
11. There is something fundamentally wrong with me.
12. I feel ashamed of my condition.
13. If I take risks to get better, I'm afraid I'll fail.
14. If I take risks to get better, I'm afraid I'll succeed.
15. If I recover fully, I might have to deal with realities I'd rather not face.
16. I feel like I'm nothing (or can't make it) unless I'm loved.
17. I can't stand being separated from others.
18. If a person I love doesn't love me in return, I feel like it's my fault.
19. It's very hard to be alone.
20. What others think of me is very important.
21. I feel personally threatened when criticized.
22. It's important to please others.
23. People won't like me if they see who I really am.
24. I need to keep up a front or others will see my weaknesses.
25. I have to achieve or produce something significant in order to feel okay about myself.
26. My accomplishments at work/school are extremely important.
27. Success is everything.
28. I have to be the best at what I do.



29. I have to be somebody—somebody outstanding.
30. To fail is terrible.
31. I can't rely on others for help.
32. I can't receive from others.
33. If I let someone get too close, I'm afraid of being controlled.
34. I can't tolerate being out of control.
35. I'm the only one who can solve my problems.
36. I should always be very generous and unselfish.
37. I should be the *perfect* ... (Rate each below.)
  - employee                      • lover
  - professional                • friend
  - spouse                        • student
  - parent                        • son/daughter
38. I should be able to endure any hardship.
39. I should be able to find a quick solution to every problem.
40. I should never be tired or fatigued.
41. I should always be efficient.
42. I should always be competent.
43. I should always be able to foresee everything.
44. I should never be angry or irritable. Or: I don't like (or am afraid of) anger.
45. I should always be pleasant or nice, no matter how I feel.
46. I often feel ... (Rate each below.)
  - ugly                              • unintelligent
  - inferior or defective        • guilty or ashamed
47. I'm just the way I am—I can't really change.
48. The world outside is a dangerous place.
49. Unless you worry about a problem, it just gets worse.
50. It's risky to trust people.
51. My problems will go away on their own with time.
52. I feel anxious about making mistakes.
53. I demand perfection of myself.
54. If I didn't have my safe person (or safe place), I'm afraid I couldn't cope.
55. If I stop worrying, I'm afraid something bad will happen.
56. I'm afraid to face the world out there on my own.
57. My self-worth isn't a given—it has to be earned.



You may have noticed that some of the beliefs on the questionnaire fall into specific groups, each of which reflects a very basic belief or attitude toward life.\* Go back over your answers and see how you scored with respect to each of the groups of beliefs listed below.

Add up your scores for each of the following subgroups of beliefs. If your total score on the items in a particular subgroup exceeds the criterion value, then this is likely to be a problem area for you. It's important that you give this subgroup special attention when you begin to work with affirmations to start changing your mistaken beliefs.

If your total score for questions 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11 is over 15:

You likely believe that you are powerless, have little or no control over outside circumstances, or are unable to do much that could help your situation. In sum, "I'm powerless" or "I can't do much about my life."

If your total score for questions 16, 17, 18, 19, 54, 56 is over 15:

You likely believe that your self-worth is dependent on the love of someone else. You feel that you need another's (or others') love to feel okay about yourself and to cope. In sum, "My worth and security are dependent on being loved."

If your total score for questions 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 45 is over 15:

You likely believe that your self-worth is dependent on others' approval. Being pleasing and getting acceptance from others is very important for your sense of security and your sense of who you are. In sum, "My worth and security depend on the approval of others."

If your total score for questions 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 41, 42 is over 20:

You likely believe that your self-worth is dependent on external achievements, such as school or career performance, status, or wealth. In sum, "My worth is dependent on my performance or achievements."

If your total score for questions 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 50 is over 15:

You likely believe that you can't trust, rely on, or receive help from others. You may have a tendency to keep a distance from people and avoid intimacy for fear of losing control. In sum, "If I trust or get too close, I'll lose control."

If your total score for questions 37, 38, 39, 40, 52, 53 is over 25:

You likely believe that you have to be perfect in some or many areas of life. You make excessive demands on yourself. There is no room for mistakes. In sum, "I have to be perfect" or "It's not okay to make mistakes."

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\* The idea for defining subgroups of beliefs was adapted from David Burns, MD, *Feeling Good*. See his book for further details on how to counter and work with mistaken beliefs.