

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are the deeply held ideas you have about yourself, others, and the world. They often develop early in life based on your experiences and can influence how you interpret and respond to situations. They can range from positive to negative.

It can be hard to figure out your core beliefs because they sometimes seem to operate below the “surface” of our awareness. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) suggests that we can begin to identify our core beliefs by exploring the meaning of our more surface-level thoughts.

On this worksheet, **think about a time you felt a very strong emotion.** We'll prompt you to recall your thoughts and follow them to a potential core belief. We've provided an example on this page and the next page is blank.

Situation: what happened?

I was working on my first big project at my new job. I sent a draft to my manager and received many more edits than I was expecting on every slide.

Feelings: what emotions did you feel?

Alarmed, panicked, ashamed

Thoughts: what did you think?

“I’m doing terribly. I am never going to succeed at this project or this job”

What does this thought mean about you? / What fear does it bring up?

It means I’m not good enough at my job and I can’t handle big projects

What does this thought mean about you? / What fear does it bring up?

I’ll get reassigned to tasks that are less important (or fired)

What does this thought mean about you? / What fear does it bring up?

I’ll never succeed in anything meaningful

What does this mean about you at your core (potential core belief)?

I’ll never be good enough (if I don’t achieve at work)

To see more examples of core beliefs, you can check out our [Identifying Core Beliefs worksheet](#).



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**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



Core Beliefs

Understanding where your core beliefs come from can help you see why they have such a strong hold on you. On this page, reflect with any and all journaling prompts that feel relevant for you and the core belief you just explored. We've provided an example on this page and the next page is blank.

When did you start feeling this way? What was going on?

I had a really tough time in elementary school. It seemed like everyone else was doing very well, but I needed a lot of extra help. It got so difficult that I was held back one year. Later we figured out dyslexia was making it hard for me to read, but that didn't make me feel much better back then. I still saw my old classmates on the playground all the time and thought how I wasn't smart enough to be in their class anymore.

What messages from people around you or society reinforced your belief?

Before we knew about my dyslexia, I heard from my parents and teachers a lot about how I needed to focus and work harder. They said I could read really well if I just applied myself and stopped being lazy. I got a lot of praise when I did well, but people seemed frustrated when I didn't. I guess that sort of connected the dots for me between achievement and being good enough.

What experiences have strengthened your belief over time?

In high school, I was constantly worried about my grades because I really wanted to get into a good college. When I got good grades I felt relief, but only for a short period of time.

Mediocre grades made me feel terrible about myself. When I went to college, I had some tough professors who seemed to favor the students who were just naturally really smart and grasped the lessons immediately. I had to work harder to understand and felt like I was less worthy to be in my major as a result.

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What messages from people around you or society reinforced your belief?

What experiences have strengthened your belief over time?

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.