

Core Beliefs

Examining the quiet stories you hold about yourself, others, and the world.



A core belief is the sentence your nervous system finished about you before you had words for it. *I am too much. I am not enough. People leave. Love is earned. If I rest, I lose ground.* These beliefs rarely announce themselves. They simply shape what you reach for, what you avoid, and what you cannot quite let yourself want.

Cognitive therapy taught us that beliefs can be examined. Attachment research taught us where they come from. Internal Family Systems taught us why they linger even after we know better: a younger part of you is still trying to keep you safe with an old conclusion. The goal of this guide is not to argue with that part. It is to listen long enough that it no longer has to run the room.

PART ONE

Finding the belief beneath the feeling

Beliefs hide inside reactions that feel disproportionate. The intensity is the doorway. When something small lands hard, follow it down.

- What did this moment seem to *prove* about me?
- If this feeling could speak in one sentence, what would it say?
- How old does this feeling feel? Whose voice is in it?

You are looking for the sentence underneath the sentence — the conclusion your body reached long before your mind had a chance to weigh in.

PART TWO

Common belief families

- **Worth.** *I am only valuable when I am useful / impressive / pleasing.*
- **Safety.** *If I let my guard down, something will be taken from me.*
- **Belonging.** *If people knew the real me, they would leave.*
- **Agency.** *My needs are a burden. It is safer to want less.*
- **Control.** *If I'm not holding everything together, it will fall apart.*

Most people are not running one of these. They are running two or three, braided together, learned in different rooms of their childhood.



PART THREE

The compassionate interview

Instead of fighting a belief, interview the part of you that still holds it. Ask, gently:

“When did you first decide this was true? What were you trying to protect me from?”

Beliefs were almost always adaptive at the time. A child who learned *I have to be good to be loved* was not foolish — they were paying attention. The work now is not to call the child wrong. It is to let them know they are no longer the one responsible for keeping you safe.

PART FOUR

Writing a more honest sentence

Most belief work fails because it replaces an old lie with a sunny one. *I'm not enough* does not become *I'm amazing*. The nervous system won't buy it. Aim for the most truthful sentence you can currently stand.

— Old: *I am a burden*. Truer: *My needs are part of being a person, and the right people will not experience them as a burden*.

— Old: *I have to earn rest*. Truer: *Rest is part of how good work gets done, not a reward at the end of it*.

Read the truer sentence slowly. Notice what part of you doubts it. That part is not your enemy — it's where the next layer of this work begins.



The beliefs you carry were a child's best guess about how to be loved. You are allowed to revise them now.