
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS BELIEF THERAPY?

Belief therapy is based on the idea that our beliefs create our reality. This means that deeply held ideas and beliefs about life, that are often unconscious and unexamined, affect our daily emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. The importance of this concept is that it allows people to once again feel in control of their lives. If my beliefs are creating my everyday reality, and I am able to discover, examine, and change these beliefs, then I am in charge of my life to a much greater degree than previously thought.

WHERE DO THESE BELIEFS COME FROM?

It is common knowledge that our early childhood experiences have a powerful effect on our lives. What is not so easy to understand is why this is so. The reason we are so influenced by our early experiences is because that is where our first beliefs developed. It is just these beliefs that are likely to be unconscious, unexamined, and irrational. As children we accept these beliefs as *truths* and then feel and act accordingly. If our childhood beliefs or ideas are not examined, they become a basis for our adult experience. This experience then seems to confirm the limiting beliefs we hold about ourselves, reinforcing them in our everyday life. How many of us are still responding to childhood comments such as; "Big boys don't cry", "Be a good girl", "Don't be afraid", "Quit acting stupid", or "You'll never amount to anything"? How many of our daily decisions regarding parenting, health, relationships, finances, and life in general are influenced by these, often irrational ideas about ourselves?

As children we were influenced by the beliefs of parents, teachers, religious leaders, peers, and the mass media. These ideas were accepted as *truths* at a time when we were too young and unaware to evaluate them proper-

ly. They have consequently acted as powerful hypnotic suggestions, influencing our daily actions, thoughts, and emotions. Worse, as we believe these ideas to be truths and not simply ideas about reality, we never examine or consider the possibility that they can be changed, thereby changing our daily life experience. This dooms us to live out a "fate" created by others, at a time in our life when we could not evaluate or defend ourselves from this influence.

It is only by becoming aware of our conscious and unconscious beliefs that we can gain the ability to be free from these limiting ideas and create our lives, as we choose, in the present. Freud said, "the unconscious must become conscious." In this he was right, we cannot change that of which we are unaware. Choice and freedom come through awareness. Without awareness we are destined to repeat the same self-defeating behaviors and to experience the negative emotions created by forgotten, irrational beliefs.

Limiting beliefs affect every area of our lives. The first step towards change is awareness and recognition of these destructive ideas. Now let's examine the areas of our life affected and consider what we can do about it.