

Changing Beliefs

Learn the ABC's of dealing with anger and frustration with Lori Rubenstein. The fundamentals of keeping a sound mind and controlling the emotions are easily learned from following this exercise.

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Changing Beliefs

Thoughts are imperative to how we live our life and what we become, but so are beliefs. Who we are, and what we stand for are so dictated by what we believe. Frustration sets in when we are so very rigid in our beliefs that we can't see other perspectives. I know many stubborn people who are adamant about the fact that maintaining their belief system (whether it works for them or not) is a positive, stabilizing force. However, it is that very adamancy, or belief that they are right and others are wrong, that leads to frustration and disappointment in other people who do not agree with their beliefs. I am going to encourage you here to have your own beliefs, and to still notice if and when they are no longer serving your highest good, and then do something to change them. I think flexibility is a great virtue and, believe me; I have struggled for years to be less black-and-white in my own thinking and beliefs, so I know something about this. I want to give you an example of how to work with changing beliefs and how changing an automatic response to a situation can change your beliefs.

How exactly do we change a belief? Like thoughts, beliefs seem like such a simple thing to say, yet, change is truly the leap into the unknown. Many, many self-help writers have numerous theories about change. I want to share with you one of the simplest perspective changing exercises I know. It is called the ABC method of Managing your Attitude and I actually heard of it from ISS publishing on the Internet. This is how it works:

“A” stands for the “Activating Event”

“B” stands for your “Belief System”

“C” stands for the “Consequence of the Event”

What typically happens for most people around belief systems is that they have one or two experiences with A, B, and C and then they start to determine that every time **A happens, C will occur, and they ignore and pass right by B.**

Here is a simple example.

A = you get stuck in traffic

B = you believe that traffic is getting worse and you'll be stuck for a long time

C = you become angry, certain expletives are said in your head or out loud and you may even find yourself banging your fist on the horn or dashboard.

Most people go right from A (traffic) to C (angry), believing that the traffic jam made them angry! How can a traffic jam make you angry? It doesn't even make sense, yet, how many of us are right there?

We do not even realize that we have a choice. We skip right by B and never actually determine our own belief system.

So, first look at getting stuck in traffic again and this time, concentrate on knowing you have a choice around "B," your "Belief system."

A = you get stuck in traffic

B = you believe you were given some unexpected and extra time

C = you listen to a tape, or plan your day or breathe and meditate and you end up feeling gratitude for the extra gift of time!

I have a railroad going through the center of my town and, if I get stuck at the track, it is often a 15-minute stop. I spent so much energy timing the trains, trying to figure out how to get around it, and getting really pissed off when I got stuck. Just reading about the ABC system has really changed the way I function when I drive. I always have a book in the car and my cell phone, so I can read, chat with a friend, listen to music, my favorite Tony Robbins tape, or just meditate the time away.

How do you use this with other areas in your life? The key is noticing the feeling of fear or anger and then you go backwards to "A" the "Activating Event." Name the event. Next, choose your "B", what you want to "Believe" about the event. If the belief is negative, ask yourself the question, what is another perspective? Choose to hold on of those perspectives. Finally, notice the "C," "Consequence" change depending upon what you choose to believe.

I had a coach, Trudy, who used to ask me, over and over, what other perspective I could choose to have about that event. What else? What else? What else? Come up with at least five different perspectives. I remember one particular conversation in which we were talking about my husband being stubborn. The "A," activating event was his refusal to spend money on a timeshare. After a number of unpleasant perspectives (I do not like being told "no" and was not a happy camper!), I was able to see him as a tree with very deep roots – very grounded and very stable. Since I am often so spontaneous and ready to jump without thinking things through, I could appreciate his groundedness and chose not to go to the place of anger every time I heard him say the word "no." I also eventually learned that he would often

come around; I just needed to be patient, do my research and present all the evidence before he was able to say “yes” to spending large sums of money.

How else can we change beliefs? One major way is to take very good care of you. When you take good care of yourself, exercise and feed your body properly, give yourself positive, loving thoughts, and contribute to the world and others on a regular basis, you naturally are less angry with yourself and, in turn, with others.

Perspectives concerning other people (ex-spouse):

How can this apply to your ex-spouse? I once read in a small self-help book, “Bless all the memories of your marriage, the good and the bad.” Why do we do that? Your memories, your view of your marriage, created who you are today. You have the opportunity to view it as horrible, difficult, pitiful, loving, happy, rocky, voluptuous, caring, passionate, secure, mediocre, pleasant, or all the above. Probably, you have, at some time, experienced all the above in your relationship.

So, let’s work this through. “A” is your marriage. What is your belief “B?” _____ I chose to believe that my marriage was a gift; it has made me wise, strong, capable and able to give to and help others grow from their own divorce. That is my “B.” My “C” then, naturally, is gratitude for the marriage (and I can still be glad it’s over at this point in my life!).

What is your “A?” _____

What is your “B?” _____

What is your “C?” _____

It is only when we get clear about how to change our own perspectives that we can truly start looking at others in a more loving, non-judgmental way. Typically, when someone really really drives us crazy, there is an issue within ourselves yet unresolved. Our perceptions of others are often based on what we are not happy about within ourselves. So, for example, if I feel fearful about being vulnerable within a relationship, I will see in others that they are not trustworthy and will in turn not trust them. I will create some kind of drama to support my perception of the other person, based upon my own dilemmas around trust.

For those of you who have been deeply hurt at one time, you know what I am talking about. You may have taken on the perspective that you need to “control” the relationship to avoid being vulnerable. In return, to protect yourself, you end up feeling judgmental about everything the other person does. However, the reality is that if you step aside from the judgments, you will have great ability to love, feel healing, and become close to others. How do you do this? LOVE yourself. Take care of yourself. When I say LOVE yourself, I am talking about unconditional love. What does that look like? Honestly, you will feel like a fake at first. That’s OK...LOVE your FAKENESS!

Exercise: Send yourself LOVE. LOOK into your EYES in the mirror and tell yourself you LOVE yourself. Look at your naked body, say "I LOVE my body" (remember...it is ok to feel phony here). Say "I AM BEAUTIFUL, STRONG, VIBRANT, HEALTHY, VITAL, DIVINE, COURAGEOUS, SMART, ABUNDANT and CREATIVE. Repeat I LOVE MYSELF AND GOD LOVES ME. I LOVE MY MIND, I LOVE MY BODY, I LOVE MY SPIRIT, I LOVE MY SOUL. ALL I NEED IS WITHIN ME NOW!" Repeat these words five (5) times per day. It is even better if you dance, jump up and down on a rebounder, or if you do not have a rebounder, lift yourself up and down on your toes and move your body as you say these words. At the same time, keep your thoughts clear and pure and loving. Do you want to change, OK, then trust me and take a big leap of faith here – dance naked, move your body and send yourself LOVE! Do this daily for two (2) weeks and you will feel better about yourself.

Zen theory of change:

I change not by trying to be something other than I am.

I change by being fully aware of how I am.

When you feel great about yourself...even all your imperfections, other people's shortcomings are of little concern to you. It is amazing how quickly your ex-spouse's faults and foibles become inconsequential.

Here is an example of a common incident and how you can use the tool you just learned with your new flexibility thinking: Yourex drops the children off outside of your driveway in the street. You are angry because he refuses to drive into your driveway. You think: What, he thinks he's too good to pull into our driveway? What is he trying to hide? I bet he had his girlfriend in the car! When you notice you are going down this path, you remember...Oh, this is a gremlin thought! What are some other options or perspectives? He was in a rush. Maybe if he did have a girlfriend, he doesn't want to hurt your feelings. Another is that he felt that pulling in was affecting his own feelings of being sad about what he lost. Another is that he wants to avoid a fight, he's afraid of your new boyfriend or it hurts him to see another man in the house with his kids. Maybe the kids asked him to drop them off on the street?

Acceptance of where you are

Some gremlin behavior is about how you react to someone else. For example, notice if you are angry or sad, whether you react the same way time and time again. A gremlin LOVES the habit of reacting in the same way every time. Notice if this is true for you. Your gremlin wants you to believe that if you go over and over the same facts concerning a particular event or emotion, you will "figure your way" out of it. The reality is that we are rarely successful in figuring our way through a situation when we argue with, or analyze, our gremlin. If you are working on a problem, don't bother looking to your gremlin for a solution.

Your gremlin wants you to “think” that working something out requires hard work, analyzing, worrying, grunting and groaning. Do NOT make new rules about what you “SHOULD” or “MUST” or “NEED TO” do or be. Instead of listening to the gremlin, BREATHE, NOTICE, and take it SLOWLY. Feel your feelings. Acknowledge your feelings. Choose what you want to do with the feelings you may have. For example, anger is not bad; hitting someone is. Think of all your options. Select those consistent with who you really are. When your gremlin has you thinking, “I can’t...” it wants you to believe you are incapable of what you want to do or be. Become aware of the “you can’t’s” “you should’s” and “you-need-to’s” ...and see what is, in fact, accurate. Make a choice...or say, “Until now, I have chosen not to...and now I choose to...” One more thing, look out for the “You don’t deserve” gremlin and the “I am scared to death” gremlin.

NOTE: When you begin to do battle with your gremlin, it has defeated you! If you are exhausted, STOP and go back and simply NOTICE.

Make a conscious decision to accept the fact that taming your gremlin is an ongoing adventure and it will be forever. Don’t get caught up in judging yourself that you are not beyond “that point.” There is no “I’m done” or “finish line.” Being in process, noticing, choosing and playing with options are all valid states of being in the NOW. Accept yourself where you are...and it will be amazing how your judging of others will automatically lessen!

Once you actively change your thoughts and old belief systems that no longer serve you, guess what else starts changing...your perspective! How you view the world changes dramatically. You can see in each new situation that you may start to react in the previous old-worn out pattern, but once you wake up and NOTICE it, boom, the outcome is different. You have become, dare I say it?

FLEXIBLE

Transcending Divorce

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