

Core Beliefs

Levels of Thought

- Automatic Thoughts
 - Moment to moment unplanned thoughts that flow through our minds throughout the day
 - Operate within one situation.
- Core Beliefs
 - “Screens” or “Filters” that help us process and code information
 - All or nothing statements about our Self, Others, and World
 - They are the roots of our automatic thoughts
 - They come in pairs (e.g., I am lovable vs. I am unlovable)

Example – Core Beliefs

- Situation:
 - Steven struggles with depression and often thinks that the work he does is not good enough for anyone. He is working on completing a final assignment for school tonight.
- Automatic Thought:
 - "I am going to mess up this assignment"
- Core Belief:
 - I AM worthless.

How Core Beliefs Develop

- They come in pairs (e.g., I am lovable, I am unlovable) and we have many of them about ourselves, others, and the world.
- Core beliefs become activated when we experience strong emotions or situations that are either positive or negative.
 - Feeling good -> positive core beliefs active (e.g., I am lovable)
 - Feeling bad -> negative core beliefs active (e.g., I am unlovable)
- After a core belief gets activated, they affect how we see things and give rise to related automatic thoughts.

Activated Core Beliefs

- If I am in a positive mood, and I make a mistake, I will think to myself “If I make a mistake, I can fix it because I am clever.”
- If I am in a negative mood, and I make a mistake, I will think to myself “If I make a mistake, it shows how worthless I am.”

Identifying Core Beliefs – Downward Arrow

1. Use a Thought Record to Identify a Hot Thought in Column 3
2. Start to ask yourself about the Hot Thought – “If this is true, what does it say about me? Other people? The world or my life?”
3. By repeating this process – we can drill down to the core belief

Identifying Core Beliefs – I am...

- Imagine a situation in which you had a strong emotional reaction. Imagine the situation vividly, as if you are reliving it now. As you image this situation, with these strong moods activated, how do you see yourself, others, and the world?
- I am...
- Others are...
- The world is...

Identifying New Core Beliefs

- Once we have identified the dysfunctional core belief that we would like to change, we should select a new core belief that we would like to strengthen in its place.
- The new core belief can be more nuanced and less simple than the original dysfunctional belief.
- It is important to use your own words in selecting your new core belief – have it resonate with you emotionally.

Old Core Belief vs. New Core Belief Examples

- I am a failure → I grow from my mistakes and that's okay
- People are untrustworthy → It's okay to trust people gradually
- I am incompetent → I am competent
→ Competence grows with time, effort, and practice
- I am unlovable → I am loveable
→ I can give myself the love I never received
- I am judged harshly for my failures → I'm okay even when people see my faults

Strengthening New Core Beliefs

- Recording Evidence
- Rating Behaviors on a Scale
- Behavioral Experiments

Record Evidence that Supports New Core Beliefs

New Core Belief	Belief (out of 100)	Evidence that Supports New Core Belief	Belief After 2-3 Weeks (out of 100)
I grow from my mistakes and that's okay	0	<p>I made a mistake learning a new program at work, but got feedback and succeed on the actual assignment</p> <p>My boss told me it was normal for it to take a few weeks to learn the new software</p> <p>I put something in the dishwasher on the wrong rack and it broke – and saw my brother do the same things and told him and helped him prevent the mistake</p>	10

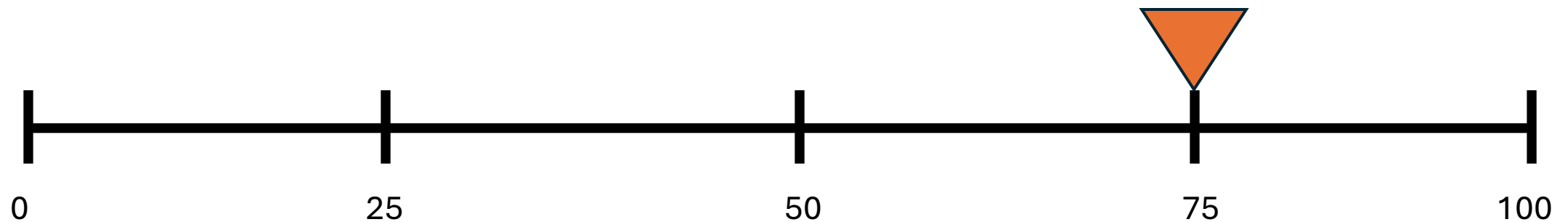
Rating Behaviours on a Scale

- Core beliefs come in pairs of opposites that can be quite strict. This dichotomy can make categorizing our behaviours difficult when recording evidence because we interpret our behaviours as either success or failure.
- Scales can be very helpful to assist us in evaluating our behaviors and the behaviors in others in a more graded way that can be more nuanced in generating evidence. This can help strengthen new core beliefs.

Rating Behaviours on a Scale

Core Belief: I am competent

Rated Behaviour: I passed the test on the new procedure manual at work – but I made a few mistakes.



Behavioral Experiments

- Building confidence in core beliefs through experiments can be more efficient than other methods because it increases the frequency of evidence-generating events.
- The aim is to do small daily experiments and build-up evidence. It can still take a lot of work and time, and some do other follow-up groups to continue to work on these goals.

Testing Core Beliefs

1. Write down the new core belief that you would like to test and strengthen
2. Develop several experiments to test your core beliefs
3. Make a specific predictions for each experiment in accordance with core belief
4. Run the experiments multiple times and write down the outcomes
5. Compare outcomes with predictions
6. Track evidence with Strengthening New Core Beliefs worksheet

Example 1: Acting “As If” Core Belief is True

- NEW CORE BELIEF: I am competent
- OLD CORE BELIEF: I am incompetent
- EXPERIMENT:
 - Try and take on a new task without overpreparing
 - Handle a small problem on your own
- PREDICTION:
 - I will succeed / I will partially succeed
 - I will fail / I will give-up

Example 2: Trying Something New

- NEW CORE BELIEF: My needs are as important as others needs
- OLD CORE BELIEF: My needs are less important as others needs
- EXPERIMENT:
 - Saying a polite “No thanks” when someone asks too much of us
 - Asking for something reasonable from someone that we know
- PREDICTION:
 - I will feel better when I express my needs
 - People will help / People will get think I am selfish

Example 3: Facing Avoidant Situations

- NEW CORE BELIEF: It's okay to trust people gradually
- OLD CORE BELIEF: People cannot be trusted
- EXPERIMENT:
 - Share something small but personal with a friend
 - Let a friend or partner make a small decision for you
- PREDICTION:
 - They will respect my privacy / They will use what I said against me
 - They will make a reasonable choice / They will pick something inconsiderate

Testing Core Beliefs

Name:

Date:

Instructions: (1) Identify a core belief that you would like to test (2) Develop experiments to test the core belief (3) Make predictions for each experiment (4) Run each experiment multiple times and track the outcomes (5) Compare the outcomes with the predictions and evaluate any differences (6) Rank on the scale how much you believe the new core belief after the experiments are complete.

New Core Belief:

Experiment	Prediction	Outcomes	What I Learned

How much do you believe
the new core belief:

