

Identifying Core Beliefs

Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

What have you brought mindful awareness to today? Check all that apply.

Heart

Mind

Body

Breath

Environment

To begin this Meditation, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



PURPOSE / EFFECTS:

Below many of our automatic thoughts lie core beliefs and assumptions that create and influence our day-to-day thoughts and worldview. By identifying these core beliefs we can begin to challenge them and come up with new, more realistic views that often include a more positive outlook about ourselves, our lives, other people, and the future.

METHOD:

Summary

When you realize that you are upset, examine your thoughts in that moment, including those murmuring in the background of awareness. Pick a thought that seems particularly prominent, central, or at the heart of the upset, and then ask yourself if even deeper assumptions or beliefs underlie this thought, such as ideas about yourself, the world, or life that reach back into your childhood.

When you find deeper assumptions, write them down... and then ask yourself again if there are even deeper views or perspectives beneath these thoughts. Don't be obsessive about this process, and let yourself do it for only a few minutes at a time. And once you find a core belief, then step back and ask yourself if it is really true.

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Long Version

- When you realize that you are upset and experiencing negative emotions, recognize what thoughts are occurring and write down a particularly gripping or distressing thought.
- Next, ask yourself, “What would happen if this thought were true? What would it say/mean about me or my situation?”
- Draw a downward arrow below your first thought and write down the answer to these questions below the arrow. Then ask yourself again, “What would happen if this next thought were true? What would it say/mean about me or my situation?”
- Write down the answer again and keep doing this process until you cannot answer it anymore and come to a solid conclusion, which is a core belief.
- Recognize and identify this core belief and begin to question and challenge its validity.
 1. Ask yourself, “Is this belief always true 100% all of the time?”
 2. Additionally, see Disputing Negative Thoughts and Common Errors in Thinking for more help challenging this belief.
- This method can also be done with core views about others and the world. Starting with a negative thought about other people or the world, ask yourself, “What would happen if this was true? “What would it say or mean about others/ the world?”

HISTORY:

Identifying core beliefs and assumptions using this downward arrow technique is a common practice in cognitive behavioral therapy and was created by Dr. David Burns. The method presented here was adapted from Dr. Burns’ Vertical Arrow Technique in his book, *The Feeling Good Handbook*. It was also adapted from Dr. Nancy Padesky and Dr. Dennis Greenberger’s Downward Arrow Technique in their book, *Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think*.

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CAUTIONS:

It is quite possible to be unaware of our core beliefs. Discovering them can sometimes be disheartening or it can be painful to realize that these views have been influencing our lives for many years.

Please be gentle with yourself for having whatever beliefs you do. Try to remember that you are more than your beliefs and assumptions and beliefs can be changed.

