**MODULE 5: THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS AND BELIEFS**

**LESSON 2: BELIEF SYSTEMS**

**What is a belief system?**

Beliefs are embedded thoughts, feelings, ideas, patterns of thinking that we have about ourselves, others, the world**.** Beliefs become the bedrock, the foundation upon which we filter experience and know ‘the truth...’. They create the lenses through which we relate to ourselves and the world.

Whether loving, grudging, fearful, affirming, or judging, conscious or unconscious, everyone has belief systems. They are normal and part of the human experience; we need them to survive, to operate in the physical world. Many belief systems are healthy, necessary and helpful, while others are limiting and cause us to self-sabotage and stay stuck in destructive habits.

When our beliefs are conscious - when we are aware of them, they structure our responses to life experiences; they give form to thoughts and actions. However, when our beliefs are unconscious, we react - with no thought. Life experiences become the trigger and our thoughts are filled with the words like ‘it makes me...’, ‘if only ...’, ‘they shouldn't....’, or ‘it’s hard...’.

When we react, we tend to see ourselves as the victims - life is doing this to us, to others - because of qualities ‘I am ugly’, ‘I am stupid’, etc, or events – ‘I was just lucky’, ‘you can't trust men’, ‘the government always lies’, etc. We often experience feelings of lack, of not being appreciated or that life is hard.

It is tempting to say that some beliefs are the TRUTH and some are LIES. This is the way we support our own beliefs, and discount others. If the belief system of another agrees or aligns with ours, it is valid and true. If it conflicts with ours - we discount it, dismiss it as unrealistic, not TRUE, a LIE.

Belief systems can become pathological when are they become fixed and hard wired and can manifest in physical illness, dysfunctional relationships and suffering - when we become attached, defined and identified by them.

Many belief systems were formed as a survival strategy or as a way to keep us safe. They may also have been useful as a driving force to move ahead or grow for a certain period of our lives. However, sometimes these old belief systems, while they may have been helpful for a time, are no longer relevant and in fact may be standing in the way of our growth.

Working with, identifying and breaking free from belief systems and patterns is very powerful as it allows us to live from a more authentic space.

**How are belief systems/powerful personal truths created?**

Here are several threads, or possibilities to consider:

* **Inherited from DNA** - there is research both scientific and psychological to suggest that we can inherit a belief, fears and trauma through our DNA. Refer to Bruce Lipton: *The Biology of Belief* and Bert Hellinger: *Family Constellation Therapy - Love's Hidden Symmetry*
* **Past life factors** - the soul carries experiences below conscious thought from one life time to another
* **Womb experience** - babies are conscious beings and can, while still in the womb, learn, experience emotions and develop beliefs about themselves, life and the world as either a safe or fearful place. Babies are affected by the external environment of the mother and father, the internal state of both parents, their reactions to world events, the biochemical balances within the mother’s body, and whether she herself is feeling safe and loved. They are also influenced by whether the conception is conscious on the part of the parents as well as the emotional bond between the mother and the father. Babies perceive through the mother, they sense and feel as one being.
* **The Birth Experience** -birth is our first experience of life in the physical world. Prolonged or traumatic experiences can stay locked within the cellular memory and can also reveal itself in certain postures, habitual muscular tension or dysfunctional breathing pattern.
* **Family conditioning** - Family systems have certain beliefs and patterns of behaviour and communication that can be passed through the generations.
* **Religious conditioning** -Religious conditioning forms our first idea of a higher power, who we are in relation to this power. The idea of heaven and hell and a judgemental punishing ‘God’ can install deep feelings of guilt and fear.
* **Cultural/Social conditioning** - in the world of social media, this is becoming an even greater influence on what we believe to be important and ideas of what success means.
* **Specific experiences** - we form strong beliefs based on the life experiences that are charged with emotion, especially those that occur early on in our lives when our brain is more plastic.

As belief systems develop within us, they begin to filter our life experiences, further embedding themselves within us, first at an unconscious level.

Whether conscious or unconscious, our beliefs grow, strengthen and take only from life experience those events, thoughts and feelings that support and validate their existence. When we find ourselves reacting strongly, embracing or rejecting a thought, a person, or an action quickly and intensely it is a great signal to us - that a belief system has become activated and is actively strengthening or defending itself.

Belief systems are dedicated to proving their truth, either through:

Experiences that validate - a thought that includes language such as “I knew I was right”

* Feelings of self-righteousness or satisfaction
* A thought that dismisses e.g.: "that's so dumb”
* A thought that diminishes - “I was just lucky; how can he love me?”

As the belief grows, it spreads its roots everywhere, in our languaging, actions and feelings. Our beliefs are vigilant, always looking to confirm, and embed even more. When belief systems become hardwired, the brain automatically filters out and forgets any counter evidence, and carefully retains any supporting evidence for the belief. They search for agreement and support to validate their truth.

**Some of their principle unconscious strategies are:**

1. **The law of Attraction**: You will tend to attract people to you who will act according to your belief or who think or ‘believe like you’. For example, if you believe you are ugly, you will tend to seek out or attract people who will tell you that you are ugly. If you believe abortion is wrong, you will bond with like-minded people who agree with you.
2. **The law of Projection**: Your friend does not return your phone call - you have thoughts - he must be interested/involved with someone else, I am not important to him as I once was, she doesn't love me etc. You put onto others your own thoughts of unworthiness; your belief about yourself finds confirmation in your projection onto the actions of others.
3. **The law of Manifestation**: You set others up to act as you believe. What you focus upon you manifest - therefore when you are fearful, when you believe the world is unsafe, you find yourself only paying attention to the news that focuses upon danger, you are fearful where you walk, who approaches you - you interpret the events and actions outside of yourself in ways that support your beliefs- e.g.: people are selfish, no one cares, I am alone - when you hold on to these thoughts, they strengthen the beliefs, they allow no room, no possibility for another thought - I am connected, people are generous - what energy and thoughts you put into the world, are reflected back. The world and your life experiences are a mirror that reflects to you your beliefs.

**Beliefs may be either positive or negative:**

**Examples of beliefs**

* I don't fit in
* I must earn love, happiness etc., to deserve it.
* People are kind and generous
* The universe is abundant
* I am connected to everyone and everything
* I am alone in the world
* There are no such thing as past lives
* The people in my life circle are my soul family
* Each of us comes here with a mission, a soul purpose
* If you really knew me, you wouldn't love me
* You make me happy
* I am only complete with you
* I am a victim of abuse
* My husband/wife/partner betrayed me

**Belief Systems are circular**:

Belief » thought » feeling » an action.

Behaviour » reinforces the belief » thought » etc. The more opportunities the belief has to be activated and reinforced, the stronger it becomes, the more embedded it is and the more actively it filters future experiences.

How do belief systems manifest within us? Belief systems can manifest in positive ways - you can believe in a life of service and dedicate yourself to improving the lives of others, protecting the environment, creating more supportive experiences of safety and love for children. They can also manifest in more subtle, indirect and negative ways: physical illness, depression, relationship challenges as you attract and seek the rescue triangle of: victim, persecutor, rescuer, and challenges in everyday life in relationships with yourself in eating disorders, addictions, and anxiety.

We can change this pattern through conscious awareness. The change is more a form of replacement therapy combined with ‘belief starvation’.

*“Beliefs exist as energy structures in our mental environment - our mind. Since beliefs exist as energy, they cannot be destroyed. Beliefs can only be transformed. And we do that by transferring their energy to another concept: one that serves us better, one that better allows us to achieve our goals or fulfill our desires.*”

We starve the beliefs that do not serve us by observing without judgement, breathing, and making a different choice with clear intention, focus and action.

We need to embrace a process that begins within ourselves. It is very easy, as the ‘healer’, the coach to focus upon fixing your clients. The most powerful and important work that you are invited to begin is within yourself. We are suggesting here a focused, dedication to be in this journey - first within yourself. Become the model for your clients - be able to speak from the first person - make I statements. As you begin this journey of change, your own belief systems undergo a magical transformation: some become dormant; some shrivel until they no longer have the capacity to filter and affect your life experiences. It shows in your languaging, your choices, your presence. Your being-ness becomes an agent of change for yourself, your family and your relationship with life.

**EXERCISE**

RECOGNISE YOUR BELIEFS: No matter what clothes they wear.

**1. Read** the following phrases/thoughts. Indicate whether you use it or think it, whether it is voiced or unvoiced.

**2. Rate** the frequency of the thoughts

**never - 1 seldom - 2, sometimes - 3, frequently - 4**

He/she should.....

I am never going to.........

No matter how hard I try, it’s not enough

I always do my best

They don't appreciate how hard I work

I deserve more money.......

My husband/wife/partner doesn't appreciate how hard I work

My husband/wife/partner/boss is never satisfied

People on welfare should just get a job

Poor people just don't work hard enough

..........people are just lazy

Men and women can't really be friends

Pit bulls are dangerous

GMO's are dangerous to my health

Eating animals is unethical

They would be successful if they just worked harder

When women say no they don't mean it.

Add phrases or thoughts that you notice within your self

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Read the following responses - indicate which ones, you use:

Rate the frequency with which you use them

**never - 1 seldom - 2, sometimes - 3, frequently - 4**

1. You make me so mad when..........

2. I would love to but.............

3. I am late because..................

4. If you loved me you would...............

5. I will do it when.................

6. If only..............................

7. add three of your own

**For the next 3 days, carry a small notebook with you everywhere.**

**Step 1**. Pick your top 2 thoughts and responses for the next 3 days. Your task is to write down, each time you observe yourself, thinking the phrase or thought, or through your thoughts or actions strengthening or defending your belief and what the person or situation is.

**Step 2**. At the end of 3 days review your journal - what pattern do you see. What are your ‘core beliefs?’

**Step 3.** Changing the belief: select a replacement phrase or word: for example - You identify that you experience yourself thinking: “If he loved me, he wouldn't yell at me” your belief is - that when people love you they do not yell at you. You can change your experience, and change your belief by:

1. Take a cleansing breath

2. Consciously choose:

A different thought

An affirmation

A question: such as:

What is the highest priority here?

What is he really saying here?