

The 3 Irrational Beliefs at the Core of Your Suffering

Why do we assign meaning to life event in the way that we do?

The short, yet profound, answer is that all of our pain and suffering is caused by 3 core irrational beliefs. Not all people hold the same variation of these beliefs, but we all believe them in one situation or another and these beliefs are always irrational. These beliefs are like internal rules that we have for how we, others, and the world “should” behave. The problem is that we normally are not aware that we have these beliefs. And if we do catch ourselves thinking these things, we don’t normally question them. By identifying which of these core irrational beliefs you tend to fall into the most, you can begin to become aware of the situations in which you apply these bogus rules. Below you will find a description of the 3 beliefs, as well as additional details that will help you identify if this belief is active within you.

BELIEF #1—APPROVAL: *I must be approved of by others to be worthy.*

- Need: acceptance, belonging
- Fear: judgment, rejection
- Demands: I expect myself to perform well and win approval from all significant others at all times, and if not I am a failure, unworthy, and deserve to suffer.

Symptoms:

- Places unrealistic expectations on oneself
- Over-concern with what other people think
- Achievement and popularity determine self-worth
- Self-critical, lack of self-acceptance

Emotional Consequences

- Depression, feeling not good enough, unable to express or embrace true self
- Anxiety, worry about what others think, being judged
- Low confidence, feeling bad about yourself, others disapproval means we are bad, can't be yourself

Behavioral Consequences

- Risk-avoidance, for fear of being judged for failing or being different
- Shyness, for fear of being embarrassed
- Procrastination, for fear of failure, judgment, risk
- Unassertiveness, for fear of rejection or criticism
- Workaholism, in order to gain approval

REPLACE WITH THIS RATIONAL BELIEF:

“I have value as a human being simply by being my authentic self, and I desire love only from those who appreciate me and recognize the good in me.”

BELIEF #2—JUDGMENT: *Other people must do "the right thing" and meet my expectations in order to be worthy.*

- Need: importance, superiority
- Fear: unfairness, disappointment
- Demands: expect all significant others to treat you kindly and fairly, as well as act appropriately, and if they don't they are unworthy, rotten people who deserve to be punished

Symptoms:

- Unrealistic expectations on others, including expecting them to be infallible, perfect
- Assuming you are the sole authority on what is right and wrong
- Assuming you have authority over others
- Believing everyone else is responsible for catering to your needs

Emotional Consequences

- Anger, rage or fury when others intentionally or unintentionally treat you poorly or unfairly or don't meet your expectations
- Impatience with others who make mistakes or aren't perfect
- Bitterness against others for not meeting your needs
- Resentment toward others for being imperfect and especially for treating you unfairly or not meeting your needs

Behavioral Consequences

- Aggression and violence as a way of punishing others for being inappropriate or not meeting expectations
 - Bigotry and intolerance of anyone who does not meet your definition of right and wrong
 - Bullying others to enforce your belief of the way others should behave or be
 - Nagging others to elicit the right action you expect and require
- RATIONAL BELIEF: All people, including myself, are imperfect, have value to offer, and have a unique perspective of the world.

BELIEF #3—COMFORT: *Life must be easy, without discomfort or inconvenience.*

- Need: certainty, comfort, justice
- Fear: adversity, uncertainty, discomfort
- Demands: expect all external conditions to be pleasant and favorable at all times and when they're not it is awful and unbearable.

Symptoms:

- Unrealistic expectations about life being perfect
- Belief that living a trouble-free life is a birthright
- Lack of belief in your ability cope with adversity
- Complete rejection of all life problems as unacceptable

Emotional Consequences

- Low frustration tolerance
- Self-pity and “poor me” attitude
- Depression, hopelessness
- Discomfort anxiety Behavioral Consequences
- Procrastination
- Shirking
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Overindulgence in "feel good" behaviors (e.g., overeating)

REPLACE WITH THIS RATIONAL BELIEF:

It is perfectly natural for life conditions to not be ideal or perfect and it's okay if situations do not exist the way I would prefer because I am capable of finding solutions to problems and making changes that bring me happiness and opportunity regardless of the situations that happen around me.

Which of these irrational beliefs do you feel you struggle with the most?

How do you experience it in your life?