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COUNSELING

Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are deeply held beliefs that impact how we view and understand ourselves, others, and the world around us. Everyone has core beliefs, and the core beliefs that you have cause you to see the world in your own unique perspective. Our core beliefs are messages that we have internalized and that we have strengthened by paying attention to things that confirm the belief. Our core beliefs may be positive or negative, and they affect the way we feel and behave in a certain situation. For example:

Situation

You have to have foot surgery that requires you to stay off your foot for 1 week and you live alone.

Core Belief

(Negative example)

I'm undeserving

(Positive example)

I'm deserving

Consequence

Thought: "I can't ask a friend to help"

Behavior: Tries to care for self

Feeling: Sad, Lonely, Frustrated

Thought: "I'm going to ask a friend to stay and help"

Behavior: Asks for help from others

Feeling: Relief, cared for, gratitude

The example above shows how a positive or negative core belief can affect the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a given situation. Understanding what core beliefs you hold can help you notice and change the thoughts and behaviors that are caused by the belief. Changing the thoughts and behaviors can help you to feel better and begin shift those

negative core beliefs to a more realistic belief that will create lasting change in areas that are distressing or holding you back.

It can be tough to identify a core belief when you first start trying to do so. One strategy that I have found to be helpful with folks is to go step by step and keep asking the question "what does that mean?" For example:

Say you go to the grocery store and end up leaving with a bunch of snacks and nothing of substance. When you are putting away your purchases you start to feel anxious and tense and having thoughts like "I always do this" and "why can't I shop like an adult"

You notice your negative reaction about yourself and want to get to the core belief behind it so you start the what does it mean exercise.

Every time I go to the grocery store I end up buying snacks and forget things that I need to make dinner. What does that mean?

That means that I am not good at planning what to get and that I will be stuck eating ramen and chips until I get paid again. What does that mean?

That means that I am not organized, irresponsible with my money, and don't take very good care of myself. What does that mean?

That means that I am not good at being an adult. What does that mean?

I'm incompetent **#This is the core belief!!!#**

In this example you just keep digging down deeper and deeper until you get to the root of it (the core belief) which is usually just one or two broad words that you apply to a variety of situations in your life.

Examples of commonly held negative core beliefs include:

"I'm unlovable" "I'm bad" "I'm worthless" "I'm not good enough"