

BELIEFS THAT HELP RELATIONSHIPS

Often, problems that surface in relationships are indications of underlying self-destructive beliefs. If you have difficulty making changes that could help your marriage, it may be because of such ideas. These thoughts are not actually caused by your partner, but were instilled in you from early life experiences. To discover thoughts you have that cause relationship glitches, ask yourself:¹

- When my partner’s behavior disturbs me, what does that mean about me?
- How do my partner’s upsetting actions make me feel about myself?
- When did I first have this disturbing thought(s) about myself?

Change Thoughts That Hurt into	... Beliefs That Help Relationships
<p>1. I have trouble asking my partner for help or expressing myself because I think:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have to fix everything and keep others happy, or I’m a failure.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m not important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I cannot get my needs met.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can’t show emotions or express feelings.</p>	<p>I can ask for help or express myself when I believe:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can understand others without having to fix them or keep them happy.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can get my needs met.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can show emotions, express my feelings, etc.</p>
<p>2. I have trouble handling my partner when he or she is upset because I think:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m trapped, helpless, or powerless.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have to get my way or I lose.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m responsible for others’ distress.</p>	<p>I can handle my partner’s distress when I think:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I have options and choices; I can do something.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can do things to reach a satisfying solution.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I decide when I contribute to others’ distress.</p>
<p>3. I have trouble when my partner wants distance or a separation because I think:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m alone or empty. No one is there for me.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can’t survive if I’m “abandoned.”</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> There is only one right person for me.</p>	<p>I can handle my partner’s desire for distance or a separation when I believe:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can find many sources of support.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can enjoy myself without my partner.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can love more than one person in a lifetime.</p>
<p>4. I have trouble with jealousy and control because I think:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I’m stupid or foolish if I’m deceived.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can’t trust anyone.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>	<p>I do not have difficulty with jealousy when I believe:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Deception is caused by my partner’s dishonesty.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can take appropriate action when I’m deceived.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I can find people to trust.</p>

When your relationship is going well, the above desired beliefs may seem completely true. It will be harder to maintain them during conflicts of interest or when your needs are not being met. Affirming new thought patterns regularly will help you adopt positive beliefs that can overcome your resistance to change and put you and your partner on the fast track to relationship success.

¹ See *EMDR: The Breakthrough Therapy* by Francine Shapiro (Basic Books, 1997) and *A Guide to Rational Living* by Ellis (Wilshire Books, 1997) for further ideas on how thoughts affect emotions.