



Change Your Beliefs, Change Your Life

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

What you believe about yourself, your abilities, and what you're capable of will predict how successfully you live your life. If you believe you're capable of great things, this will dictate your life course. Conversely, if you don't believe you're capable of great things, that too will have a major impact.

There's much in life we cannot control. We certainly can't control our past. We can, however, control our beliefs about just who we are and what we're capable of being. Since our beliefs are so important, then, we should do everything within our power to make sure they're strong and empower us, rather than limiting us.

Several years ago while I attended a seminar, we were all required to march around the city chanting about how great we were. At the time I thought this was the biggest load of ridiculousness I had ever seen. Recently, though, I have reconsidered. I don't remember the actual chant, but I recall that the point of it was to condition our brains with new beliefs about ourselves.

This tactic is hardly new; it's used by many people who guide others to success.

- Good sports coaches get their players to think highly of themselves and believe in their abilities.
- Good teachers get their students to think highly of themselves and their abilities and potential.
- Good parents get their kids to think highly of themselves and what they can achieve.

More important:

The most successful people are able to shape their beliefs about themselves in a way that makes their lives work for them, makes them successful, and contributes massively to their overall happiness.

I continue to find it fascinating how some people are introverted while others are extroverted. It creates an interesting dynamic in how people relate to the world and each other. Whether a person is one or the other generally has a major impact on the course and direction of their life. Many people are either extroverted or introverted based on beliefs about themselves that they developed somewhere along the line.

Introverted people typically draw on internal power. They read books and come to conclusions about the world. They watch television alone and enjoy themselves. They have a good meal alone and feel satisfied and content. They enjoy the quiet.

Introverts might take enormous joy in spending an entire day alone planting and weeding in the garden, working at it for the sheer pleasure of it, not caring whether others like it or not. They are empowered by the work they do alone. Their power comes internally, from their own mind—not from the energy of others.

The late J.D. Salinger, the author of *Catcher in the Rye*, was an introverted person. Salinger was never motivated to comment publicly on his writing and lived most of his life as a recluse. Instead of seeking publicity for his work, he avoided it. Instead of seeking to be around others, he avoided them. Salinger got more power internally than externally.

In contrast, extroverts tend to feel whole only when they're around others. They're empowered by the company of others and feel lifted up by them. They seek out social situations and enjoy being around large groups. Being alone makes them uncomfortable—just as introverts feel uncomfortable with groups.

The people I know who are extremely extroverted absolutely cannot stand being alone. If they're at home on a Sunday, the last thing they'll want to do is turn on the television; they'd rather be at a mall walking around where they can see people. Ideally, they'd prefer to be with a large group of their friends.

An ongoing undercurrent in society relates to the difficulty extroverts and introverts have with each other. Both types struggle to feel secure and comfortable in various situations.

Some introverts will feel the need to, say, drink at parties and social occasions, because they're uncomfortable and don't believe they'll fit in unless they can grease the wheels with alcohol to become more extroverted.

In contrast, extroverts may experience great anxiety when they're alone and not surrounded by people. In extremes, an isolated extrovert may go so far as to jump off a building if they feel they've been shunned by a group of people—life is simply no longer worth living! But the introvert? The introvert could care less.

Introverts likely hold certain beliefs and fears that make them feel uncomfortable in social situations. They may believe they won't be accepted, or that people can't be trusted and thus should be avoided.

A core belief like "People can't be trusted" will end up controlling the entire course of a person's life—socially, economically, and in many other ways. Examining a core belief like this and overturning it could potentially encourage the introvert to become more extroverted and open. But in order to do this, the introvert must adopt a new belief system.

Look at your own life: you certainly have beliefs that either empower or disempower you. Your being extroverted or introverted has its reasons—but the tendencies that make you either one or the other may also limit you to some extent. We're all of us limited by our beliefs.

From the time when we're very young, our environments give us all sorts of clues about who we are--- and we choose to either accept these beliefs or create new ones.

- If you grew up in a bad environment, you could choose to believe that you were a part of this environment and would never amount to much. Bad environments typically contain all sorts of undercurrents and signals that shape the beliefs of the people who are part of them.
- If you grew up in a good environment, you could choose to believe you'd always be successful, whatever came to pass.

Similarly, good environments typically contain their undercurrents and signals that shape the beliefs of the people who are part of them.

If you surround yourself with people who support your beliefs, then the odds are very good that your beliefs will stay strong. If you surround yourself with people who undermine your beliefs—and attempt to give you disempowering ones—then you will likely weaken and decline. If you surround yourself with people who instill in you new beliefs that make you strong, the odds are you will rise to a higher level and prevail.

Most of us are more familiar with our limitations than our assets. We form beliefs regarding what we cannot do, what we're not good at, what we should be better at. These limiting beliefs weaken us tremendously and can paralyze us. If you consistently know more about your liabilities than your assets, you're in trouble.

It's hard for us to adopt new beliefs. By the time most people have been in the working world for a few years, their numerous beliefs about the sort of person they can be are nearly set in stone, and all too often the beliefs are more limiting than liberating. It is tragic that so many people can't adopt better beliefs about themselves.

As you believe about yourself, so follows your life. Whether you believe you can or can't do something, you'll be right—because when you feel certain about something, it has an uncanny way of happening and becoming part of your life.

Do you associate with people who have negative, limiting beliefs about you? Though you're never going to find people who have entirely positive beliefs about you, if their beliefs are particularly caustic and negative, you'd do well to avoid those toxic influences. Sometimes when such people argue or get especially angry, they come out on the offensive and aggressively attack us, and the mean things they say can serve to define us:

- *"You'll never amount to anything."*
- *"You're stupid."*
- *"You're ugly."*

People who believe things like this about you will only hurt you and reinforce the negative beliefs you may already have about yourself.

It's important that you consistently challenge the limiting beliefs you have about yourself, that you mix it up to find new, positive beliefs. Challenge your old beliefs and ways of thinking; don't be limited by them! Any belief that doesn't help you just does not make sense. It wouldn't make sense to watch the same play a thousand times, for example, but that's just the sort of thing we allow ourselves to do over and over again with our limiting beliefs. The only beliefs you should be allowing to run again and again in your head are those that empower you and make you stronger.

Do you believe you'll do something significant in your life ... but only later? What if you changed your belief to one that says you'd do it today? Do you believe that if you're successful at something, people won't like you? What if you changed your belief about this?

Regardless of where you are in your life, the odds are good that changing your beliefs could benefit you tremendously. Change your beliefs, and you change your life.

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