

# Belief Audit Process

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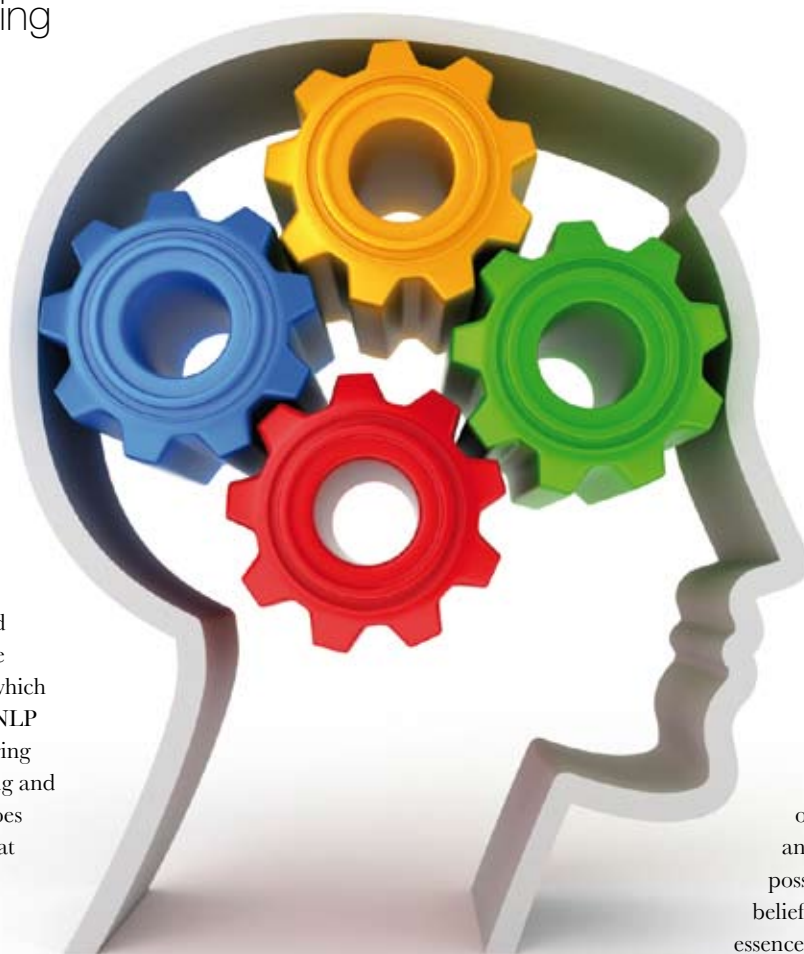
**O**ur belief is that you can be, do, or have anything (including nothing if you choose). So what stops you realising your dreams? The answer is nothing real: just your own unique belief system and as Henry Ford said, "If you believe you can or you believe you can't, which ever you think, you are right." In NLP we speak of limiting and empowering beliefs so if we clean up the limiting and plump up the empowering ones does this do the trick? Well, we think that even this is not enough because we have been programmed with some really subtle and deep beliefs about our beliefs that take some expert digging to find. We suggest that what is required is a comprehensive belief audit.

The aim of the belief audit is to discover the beliefs, or parts of beliefs, that are not in line with your true purpose that need updating so that they can be changed. While NLP offers us the tools to do the job the art lies in discovering the beliefs that are not in your consciousness. The deeper they are buried the more we need to dig to find what needs to change.

## What is a belief?

Beliefs are thoughts we keep, consciously or unconsciously, and they make our judgements and evaluations about life. Our beliefs are the on/off switches for good and bad, right or wrong and yes or no. Stated simply - if any situation fits our beliefs then we feel good. If it doesn't fit then the incongruence makes us feel bad. This is hard wired into the limbic system, the primitive part of the brain, and developed as a clear indicator of a threat to our programmed status quo.

A belief system is a synergistic collection of beliefs linked to our



value system and answering the question "Why?" And the reason we need the question "Why?" is because humans are meaning making machines. Like any system it needs maintenance.

To begin the process we question our conscious empowering beliefs, are they as empowering as we believe them to be? Next we address our conscious limiting beliefs and then we unearth, review and possibly update the unconscious beliefs that underlie them. This is the essence of a belief audit.

## It is fabulously simple.

The only problem is that if, in some way, just one belief feels that it is under threat, and this only needs to be a 0.001% element, then you can never be, do or have what you really want. Ironically we can know, at a logical level, that something is benign but if our belief system perceives it to be a threat then we respond as if that were true. You feel uncomfortable. You feel demotivated. You feel off course. This is a sure sign that you need a belief audit.

The belief audit identifies archetypal beliefs in each of the three categories; empowering, limiting and unconscious. Empowering, we've discovered, sometimes isn't all it says on the tin. "Everybody has some good in them" was one empowering belief that Claudette suggested. On further examination she discovered that as a belief there had been times when she had been too trusting of others and that updating this belief to "Everybody has good in them and be careful, everybody also has some bad in them" was in fact more empowering for her. Future pacing her life with this new updated version of her empowering belief she felt that she was going to be much more in control of her destiny.



It is the conscious limiting belief that we are most familiar with. “I’m too fat”, “I’m too tall”, “I’m not quick enough”, “I’m not clever enough”, “I’m not...”, “I’m not...”, “I’m not...”, “They won’t let me”, “They won’t like me”... “I can’t spiel.”

Now we come to the gustatory (meaty) bit, the unconscious beliefs which we have subdivided into three groups Somatic, Insidious and Misinterpreted beliefs. Each can be encountered at varying degrees of consciousness. Somatic beliefs are the most deeply unconscious...

Somatic beliefs are beliefs held in the physical body. They are held there because they were taken on non-verbally at a very early or extremely vulnerable point in your life. A belief held here “goes without saying”. It goes without saying because you don’t have words to explain it. It was formed without words. Somatic beliefs are in the muscle. We exercise and nourish them, without knowing them, by feeling, sensing and acting upon them without question.

Take the man; we will call him Andrew, who acts as though “There will never be enough”. Questioning Andrew revealed that he felt that his mother never fed him. Later Andrew checked this out with his mother and found that it was true that she had had insufficient milk to breastfeed him. And so it is true that for the first few months of his life he was literally starving.

Andrew continually hungered for more and believed that satisfaction was unattainable. His body learned this before he had the language to

consider it. It was carried in his unconscious, pre-language, constantly driving him to seek for more. However much he gathered for himself and his family, he could never relax; never feel comfortable because “there will never be enough” informed his thoughts, feelings and actions at every neurological level. Andrew did not know that he believed this but his body did.

Strangely by all social measures Andrew would be considered a very successful man. He had a family, a home and was very wealthy but he was desperately unhappy and didn’t know why. So many people are looking to start a family, have a lovely home and enjoy great wealth. Andrew discovered that only one thing matters, being happy now.

Insidious beliefs are introduced, often with good intentions, by family, friends, or the culture in which we have grown, right up to this moment of discovery. This type of belief can sound caring, supportive and even empowering while carrying a hidden message (often a somatic belief of the person who introduced it) the purpose of which is to control the person or to make them happy regardless.

Bev’s family belief was “Better to be lucky than rich” which at first glance, sounds supportive and empowering. Bev was conscious of saying it but unaware of the embedded unconscious message. She had developed an insidious part of the belief which was that you cannot be

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lucky and have money. On reflection Bev actually thought it was a bit more of a family story of why her father had never worked and spent most of his time down the betting office. Bev worked hard, deemed herself lucky but could never understand why money constantly slipped through her fingers. Going through the belief audit process she updated the belief to, “It is better to be lucky and rich”.

You could spend a lifetime with insidious beliefs and not realise just how much they are controlling your behaviour.

The advice “Be careful what you ask for...” applies particularly to a group of beliefs that we have named Misinterpreted beliefs.

Misinterpretation can cause a belief to be developed in quite a different way from the original intention. This can happen when the surface structure of a belief is ambiguous belying the intention of the deep structure. Robert tells the story of his mother passing on her belief that “You can’t beat the Bookie” which he interpreted (or, from his mother’s point of view misinterpreted) by becoming the Bookie and successfully running a book at school, leaving with no A levels and three (some might say colourful) years wasted. The ramification later in life of having no qualifications he puts down to “Being a smartass” and to not trying because of the belief that you can’t beat the system.

This is a rebellious misinterpretation as is often demonstrated by teenagers. The other way a belief can be misinterpreted is unconsciously.

Consider the belief “You’re only young once”. This advice was given to Alice many times during her childhood. She remembers it as ‘a family mantra’ and agrees that it was probably intended to mean “Enjoy life”. During a belief audit Alice came to see that some part of her had interpreted it differently. As a result she felt that had not been allowing herself to grow up.

#### **Alice defined her own misinterpretation:**

- “You’re only young once”.
- “You’re” meant Alice specifically
- “only” made this is a limiting belief
- “young” implied that time was slipping away, it is being young that is desirable, therefore she must remain young
- “once” there wasn’t going to be another chance, she felt she must ensure that she never allowed ageing to begin.

This belief, this part in her unconscious, had been dominating her reality and preventing her growing into adulthood both physically and emotionally. Alice, now in her thirties suffers anorexia. She had been eating only boiled sweets preventing her body developing into that of a woman. She has a responsible,

well paid, job but lives at home with her parents, still occupying her childhood bedroom with its pastel wallpaper, dolls and soft toys. She feels that “Real life had never started”.

Once Alice had understood this she rapidly came across many misinterpreted beliefs and began the process of updating them. These misinterpreted beliefs only came to the surface after she had worked through her empowering beliefs and her limiting beliefs. In the light of this work it became necessary to revisit and in some cases update her empowering beliefs. “It’s great that I still look young” had taken on a new meaning.

There is a definite and designed process to the belief audit. It is a spiral of identifying beliefs peeling them back, checking them, and aligning them so that you can be, do and have whatever you want and you might even find a new purpose to your life. ●

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