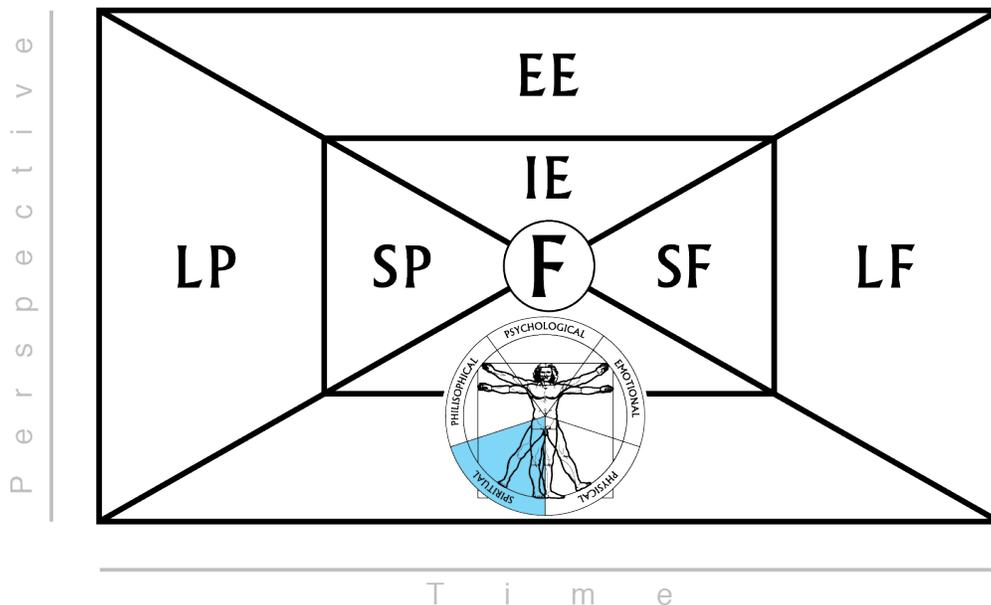




FINDING YOUR FLOW TOOLKIT VOL. 16 CLARIFYING BELIEFS

"Man is made by his belief. As he believes, so he is"

-- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Beliefs play a vital role in our performance arenas. They can play either the role of the advocate or the enemy. As intentional peak performers and flow seekers, it behooves us to periodically review and clarify our beliefs in order to sort out these very personal assets or liabilities.

We have learned from the science of cognitive psychology that most of us, over time, acquire bad mental habits as we seek to interpret our life events, often distorting the truth of our experiences. These distortions (For example: over-generalizing, minimizing the positive, magnifying the negative, etc... discussed in more detail in future newsletters—stay tuned!) can create beliefs that interfere with our ability to stay focused in the present moment where flow is found.

Luckily, for human beings, our mental models of the world can be shaped and re-shaped through awareness, clarification, solidification and ongoing refinement and practice.

Fleas and elephants aren't so lucky...

Despite the fact that human beings have the capacity to logically reason and change the course of their thinking and belief patterns, we have much to learn from these two animals. They demonstrate just how powerful beliefs can be for affecting behavior and limiting potential.

The Power of Beliefs: Fleas and Elephants

Have you ever seen how fleas are trained for a flea circus? The only tool needed: a small cup! After a short-training regimen, fleas, after hitting the top and sides of a cup, "learn" to jump only as high and wide as the cup will allow. Remove the cup and fleas will remain within a very tight boundary. Similar to fleas, elephants learn to stay put after a few days of being chained to a large tree. After the initial conditioning period, a simple rope will do the trick!

Lesson: whether flea, elephant or human: we are all governed by our learned beliefs.

Simplifying Beliefs

We might simplify the belief building process by placing them in

two simple categories:

1. World Beliefs
2. Self Beliefs

Negative Beliefs: World

- Somebody will always cheat you.
- Life's a "&*#\$!!" and then you die!
- We all have an inherent dark side.

Positive Beliefs: World

- People are naturally honest
- Everything will work out in the end
- Good will prevail over evil

These beliefs are derived from knowledge acquired by some data gathering, assumptions, and/or faith. They may have little basis in reality, yet each of us is influenced, even controlled, by these every day. An interesting story illustrates the power of untested world beliefs:

Aristotle was arguably the most intellectual man of his time. His teachings were idealized by the bulk of civilized society for more than 2,000 years. Among his philosophical observations, Aristotle made the claim that falling bodies do so at a velocity consistent with their weight. According to Aristotle, a weight of 10 pounds should drop 10 times faster than a weight of 1 pound. This assumption was held for more than 2,000 years, until Galileo came along and challenged it. He had a different assumption. Instead of blindly assuming Aristotle's claim, he gathered students and witnesses, climbed to the great tower in Pisa, Italy, and put the theory to the test. Some noteworthy lessons can be derived from this test:

Galileo did prove, with a simple test, that his theory of falling bodies was correct, dis-proving Aristotle's 2000-year-old assertion. This test took no longer than 10 minutes to perform. Many who witnessed the event claimed that Aristotle was using magic and/or

manipulated the event.

From the perspective of beliefs, this is a very powerful and useful story. First, it shows that even our most trusted sources of information should be tested. Second, it helps us recognize that our assumptions, no matter how old and ingrained, may be re-placed with a minimal amount of testing or data gathering. This is the nature of "critical thinking" skills. Third, there are many who, despite the facts, will continue to hold their initial beliefs.

Negative Beliefs: Self

- I'm not good enough.
- I'm afraid that I might screw this up.
- My past failures keep me from getting better.

Positive Beliefs: Self

- I can overcome almost any setback or obstacle.
- I can learn and master new skills to help me improve.
- Each day I'm getting more proficient in my arena.

Again, these assumptions are based upon some degree of data gathering or faith.

Do you remember a time in your younger years where somebody said something that had a profound impact on your belief system? Perhaps you were taking a sporting or music lesson and the teacher commented on your talent or lack of talent. True or not, did that single comment "stick"?

Our lives are filled with these "moments of truth" (or fiction) as some like to call them. The problem is, they are often not truth at all, but rather false assumptions based on inaccurate or incomplete information.

By contrast critical, scientific, rational thinkers learn to look more carefully and systematically at their inner and outer worlds. Instead of making grand assumptions based on minimal data or experience, they take a more rigorous look at what "is" and what "is not".

As you think about the origin and nature of your beliefs, recognize that you weren't born with them. Instead, they are self-generated by rational or irrational methods. Granted, most of us have some work to do, as our early beliefs, formed through family and social relationships, often need to be actively challenged in order to break-free of them.

Finding more flow in your MLA's and MOP's means creating more assets in your inner and outer worlds while decreasing or even eliminating your liabilities. Confronting and re-building your beliefs is a significant place to start.

To do this, consider taking some time today to identify your self-limiting beliefs and challenge them. Then perhaps you can challenge a current world-limiting belief and challenge it. I've attached two exercise documents if you care to take this challenge

Finally, start becoming deliberate about developing beliefs that will support you in your quest for excellence. Write down the beliefs that you wish to cultivate in your most important MLA's. See Building Your Belief Assets worksheet.

Committing yourself to challenging your self and world beliefs will pay great dividends as you seek to shatter old notions expand your current perspectives.

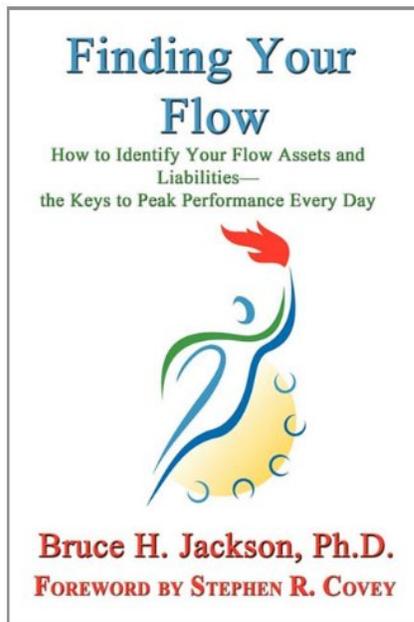
For a deeper cut at beliefs and self-confidence building, see The Principles of Personal Excellence course, Session 21.

EXERCISE AND PRACTICE:

- Exercise: Deconstructing Negative Beliefs (Self) Worksheet
- Exercise: Deconstructive Negative Beliefs (World) Worksheet
- Exercise: Building Your Beliefs Assets Worksheet. Actively deconstruct one or two beliefs about yourself and the world.

Notice how your change in beliefs change the way you see your MLA's

- Consider generating new beliefs about the world, self, and others that empower and support your flow



Finding Your Flow: How to Identify Your Flow Assets and Liabilities—The Keys to Peak Performance Every Day

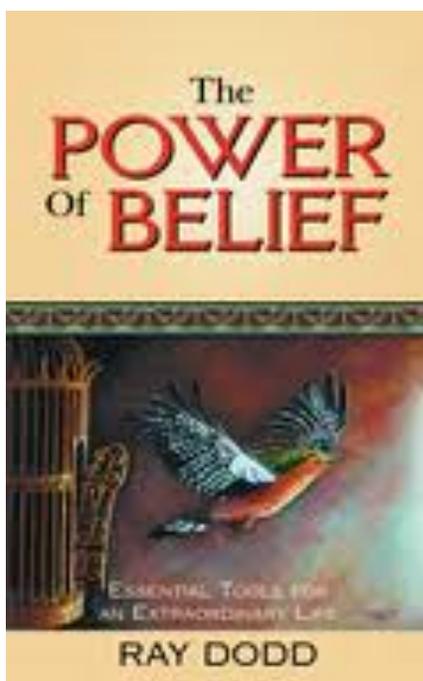
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RESOURCES:

BOOKS:

[The Power of Belief: Essential Tools for an Extraordinary Life by Ray Dodd](#)



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