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NEWSLETTER
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AUTHORS' NOTE

This month's newsletter includes the third article on The Impact of Belief. Last month I asked you to make a commitment to looking at your beliefs and behaviors. This month we'll explore how to begin to recognize them.

Until next month.....Lin

As an introduction to one of the self help books to be released later this year, I am continuing the series of columns on The Impact of Belief in this newsletter. White boxes contain examples that help to clarify the ideas being discussed. I have also placed the main concepts in black boxes. If you have any questions or comments please send them to me at amlifecoach@aol.com. Thank you!!!

Recognition of Belief

Many of the beliefs that drive our behavior operate without us being aware of them. In other words, we seldom give them much thought because they have become so unconditionally accepted we do not ever think of challenging them. I call this type of belief a 'background' belief because they remind me of the kinds of computer programs, like anti-virus software or operating software, that operate in the background while you are using a computer. You are pretty much completely unaware they are running, yet the role they play controls how well your computer will operate.

We learned about our world by being part of a family, whether that was a traditional two parent household, a single family situation or other living arrangements. We also learned from our experiences as part of a school, church, synagogue, club, or neighborhood.

Background beliefs can include simple things like knowing that the sun will come up tomorrow morning. Seldom does anyone go to bed and worry about whether or not the sun will rise in the morning. It is not a belief you think about challenging because you accept it as a fact that is very unlikely to change in your lifetime. Many background beliefs reside within your own belief system. Most of these were imprinted into your belief system when you were young. They may have been taught to you by your parents or

other respected adult, inherited as part of a family or genetic system, picked up from being part of a certain culture, or being exposed to a particular environment.

TAUGHT OR ACCEPTED BELIEFS

Unless we are some how mistreated when we grow up, we trust our parents, teachers and most other adults. Because of this trust, when we are young we pretty much accept what they teach us as truth. They may consciously instruct us through what they tell us or show us. They also unknowingly pass on some background beliefs. These are unconsciously demonstrated through their actions and words. We are simply witnesses to the behaviors. Being exposed to accepted behaviors and beliefs, whether overtly taught or inadvertently witnessed, imprints these same things into our belief systems as truths. They are one element of what makes up our ethical and moral standards.

Some examples of beliefs and behaviors we accept and mimic (at least in our early lives) include suitable ways to treat others, boundaries of personal space, acceptable public demonstrations of affection, appropriateness of lying, being late or on time, or how you greet another person (hug, handshake, nod, etc.). See *Example: A Belief That is Taught* in the concept explanation box.

EXAMPLE: A BELIEF THAT IS TAUGHT

Beliefs that we are taught and include in our own belief system are often taken for granted because they were such a natural part of your every day life growing up. Men who were raised to open doors for women do so without second thought, especially if their behavior was repeatedly positively recognized and reinforced. Even if later in life they are challenged for their behavior and decide to change it, they will most likely feel a little odd the first few times they don't open a door for a lady.

**WE LEARN BETTER
WHEN WE ARE TAUGHT
THE SAME THING
MULTIPLE WAYS**

Beliefs that are taught to us at a young age can make the greatest impacts on our belief systems. It is at this time that our beliefs are forming and we are most impressionable. If the behavior we witness matches what we are told, then we receive the same information in two different ways: hearing and seeing. Learning stays with us longer when we receive it in multiple ways, so if what we see matches what is said, it is more likely to be accepted as true and learned.

When we are young and someone tells us that it is wrong to lie, we believe them at face value. If we watch this same person always be truthful, then it reinforces that standard. We both heard them say that telling the truth is appropriate and then saw them behave in concert with what they told us. However, the opposite belief can be just as heavily reinforced if we witness them lying. We were told lying is inappropriate, but the same person that told us that was seen to lie. Now our belief may not be what they are telling us, but instead what they are showing us. Remember, what we do speaks far louder than what we say.

**WHAT WE DO
SPEAKS FAR LOUDER
THAN WHAT WE SAY**

CULTURAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL BELIEFS

Besides being a product of our home conditions, we are also influenced by the other environments to which we are exposed. If we are sheltered and kept from the world, then our belief systems tend to be more rigid due to lack of exposure to alternative beliefs. Our view of the world has been protected and we may not be able to comprehend ideas or standards that fall outside of our belief system. On the

other hand, when we have been shown a variety of lifestyles, living situations, conditions, cultures, and beliefs, we have the opportunity to be more open minded and accepting of other ideas and ways of being. That does not mean that we will be more broad-minded; it just means we had more of a chance to be so because we were introduced to more experiences.

Some of the more prevalent local environmental exposures include schools, day care establishments, religious organizations, grandparents' homes, cities (or towns or rural settings), and cultural events (plays, concerts, etc). Each of these is filled with differences in people and, therefore, differences in beliefs.

On a broader level they include the country we come from and the ethnic heritage to which we belong. Society carries with it large belief systems that we either adhere to or rebel against. When we are growing up we get clues from our parents and other influential adults in our lives as to what is acceptable, which again influences our own belief regarding conforming or rebelling to society's beliefs.

We learn what our country of origin believes about its friends and foes and can either adopt the same beliefs or work to alter them. Once again, the contact we have with people that are for or against our country's beliefs will impact our own belief. The same is true for those of common ethnic heritage or religious affiliation.

Just as with taught or accepted beliefs, cultural and environmental beliefs can be learned from direct experience or by exposure to others' experiences. They do not need to be explicitly told or shown to us for us to pick them up.

INHERITED BELIEFS

Many of our beliefs come from our experiences within our family structure, whatever that may look like. In today's world there are numerous possibilities -- step parents and step siblings, parents of the same sex, traditional two parent families, single parent situations, extended families (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins), etc. Other beliefs are inherited through our

EXAMPLE: ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE

Most children attend school where they are exposed to many different beliefs and behaviors. It does not take long for teenagers or even younger kids to discover they are judged by what they wear, who they associate with and how they act. The desire to fit in is strong in most humans, so the influence of the experiences that occur at school can be more powerful than the lessons received at home.

If a young girl, Sally, is made fun of for wearing shorts with flowers on them, then she is less likely to wear them again. She has learned that what you wear affects how others treat you. Sally's belief system has been influenced by her experience of being teased. As a result, she forms a belief that what you wear will determine whether or not others accept you.

This same young girl wants to be part of the popular crowd at school. From her previous experience, Sally knows that how she dresses is one element of being accepted by the popular crowd. She buys the 'right', acceptable clothes and works to be included. She is ecstatic when she is 'lucky' enough to gain the right to be included.

Unfortunately, the group of popular kids she has chosen to become part of believes you need to drink to be 'cool'. Sally has never discussed drinking with her parents because they never considered the possibility that Sally, at her age, would be faced with any choices about drinking. However, the group she is now part of drinks excessively. At first she refuses the alcohol she is offered, but that leads to being teased. Sally knows she is too young to drink and that it is illegal, but she wants to fit in. Her experience of rejection when she wore flowered shorts and the belief that resulted from that experience are now an influence in her decision about drinking in order to fit in. She elects to drink, is praised for her choice and continues to be accepted as part of the popular group for her choice, which reinforces the behavior. This experience adds to her belief that what you wear determines your acceptance, and Sally now believes that she must drink alcohol to be accepted. Sally's environment has taught her these beliefs and probably many more.

constant contact with other systems or groups, such as clubs, churches, neighbors, and schools.

When you are growing up you are surrounded by a variety of belief systems that agree in some areas and collide in others. You inherit many of your beliefs through your exposure day in and day out to such systems. Even if you have not had the direct experience yourself, the fact that you are in constant contact with people who did have first hand experience gives you an exposure to the experience. When your parents, teachers and community hold a belief and somehow repeatedly demonstrate or relate their experiences to you, you often take on this belief as your own. In other words, the indirect experience is enough to affect your belief system. In the example box, *Example: Inherited Belief*, you will find a belief that some people hold even though they never had any direct exposure to the experience that originally formed the belief.

CONTINUAL EXPOSURE TO
OTHERS' EXPERIENCES CAN
INFLUENCE OUR BELIEFS AS IF
WE HAD GONE THROUGH THE
EXPERIENCE OURSELVES

EXAMPLE: INHERITED BELIEF

From about the 12th to as late as the 16th century there were numerous attempts by Europeans to recover the Holy Lands from the Muslims. These raids, attacks and wars were called The Crusades. Muslims that inhabit that region today still know and feel the devastation The Crusades caused. Even though The Crusades occurred over five hundred years ago, the environment is still one that holds on to how negative the experience was. The belief about The Crusades causes many Muslims to feel a reaction today. In fact it is strongly advised that you avoid the use of the word 'crusade' when traveling in the Middle Eastern region because of the negative feelings it generates for many Muslims.

More and more it is becoming an accepted truth that our ancestors' abilities are passed to us through our genes. If that is true then is it not also possible that their beliefs are remembered in our genetic structure? If it is true that we are evolving, then we must have the ability to remember the information and lessons we have gained during this evolution. Can you consider the possibility that the soul, which is eternal, has the responsibility to bring our previous lessons to us? If you can accept that possibility, then it is not far to go to believe that we hold information in our cells that came from our experiences in previous lifetimes or in other dimensions, including the remnants of the beliefs we held.

Although there can be a fine line between beliefs that are taught or accepted, cultural or environmental and those that are inherited, it is not important to brand the belief. What is important is to be able to recognize that your behavior is driven by values, ethics and morals that are derived from many sources. By exercising your free will you are responsible for keeping those beliefs that support you and jettisoning those that are unhealthy and do not serve you.

Next month we will explore Hidden Beliefs. Until then.....remember.....

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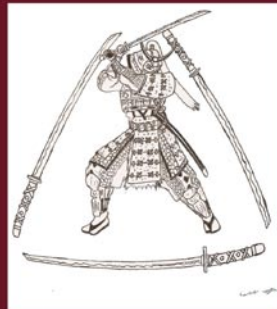


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