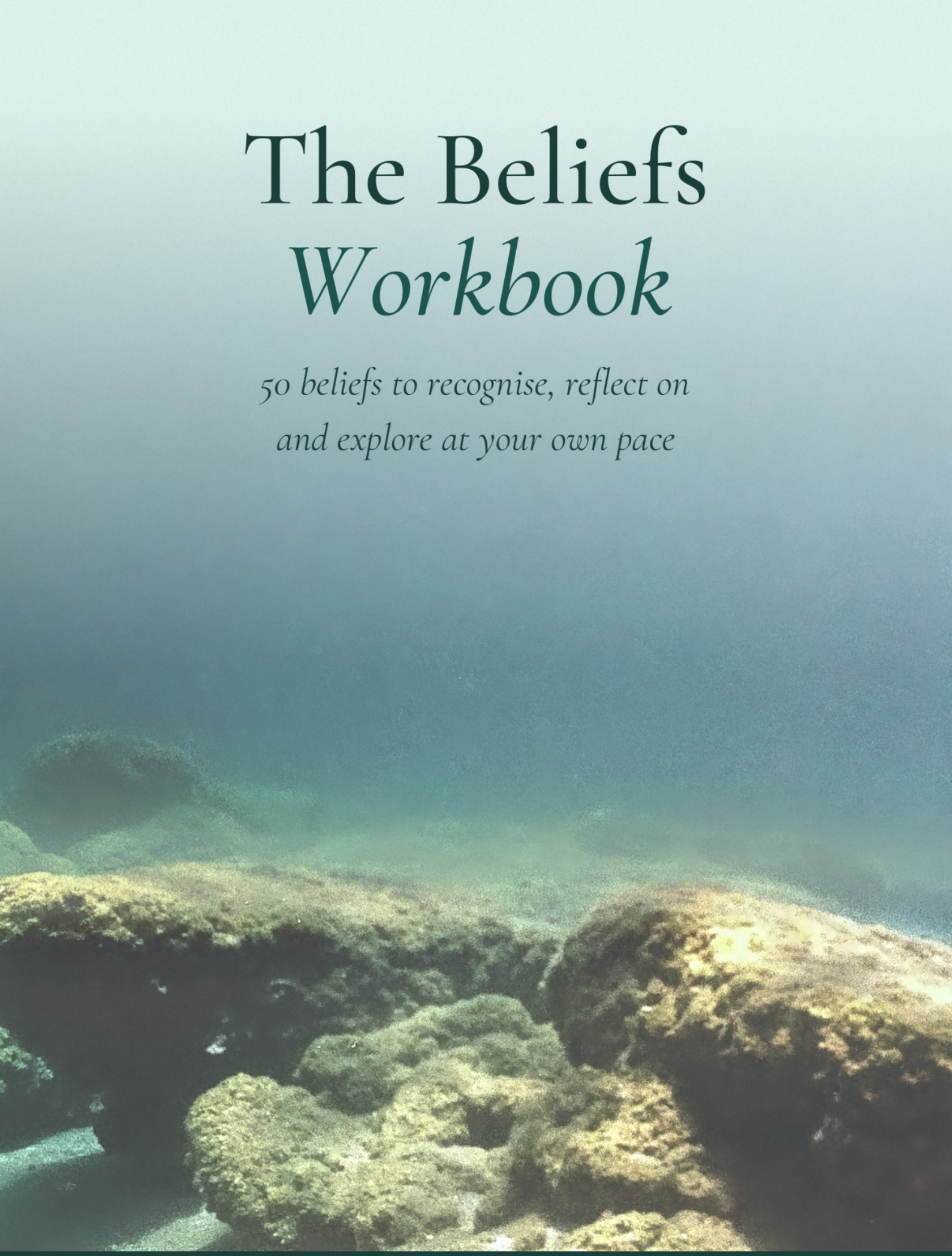
The Beliefs *Workbook*

50 beliefs to recognise, reflect on and explore at your own pace



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INTEGRATIVE WELLNESS

The Beliefs Workbook

50 beliefs to recognise, reflect on and explore at your own pace

Find words for a familiar feeling. Begin wherever you recognise yourself.

Step 1 of 3: Explore Your Beliefs. Learn to Tap and Work With Your Pattern are available at vickiharding.com/free-resources/.

This workbook is a self-guided reflection resource. You can read online at vickiharding.com/beliefs/ or download and write directly into the fillable fields. A belief is an invitation to explore, not a diagnosis or a fact about you.

What is inside

Five sections, fifty beliefs and space to reflect on each one. Each belief has three questions and an optional deeper thread. You do not need to work through them in order.

Self-worth, love and belonging

1. I'm not good enough
2. I'm a failure
3. I can't accept myself
4. There's something wrong with me
5. I'm bad
6. I'm too much
7. I'm unattractive
8. I have to be hard on myself
9. I have to be perfect
10. I have to earn my place
11. I don't deserve good things
12. I'm unlovable
13. I'm no good at love
14. I can't love someone I'm disappointed in
15. I'm unwanted
16. The people I love will leave me
17. I don't matter
18. I don't fit anywhere
19. I'm behind everyone else

Needs, care and boundaries

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Safety, trust and uncertainty

35. The world is a dangerous place
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37. I'm safer on my own
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42. Money isn't for people like me
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Blame, regret and making peace

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47. It was my fault
48. I should have known
49. I can't forgive myself
50. It shouldn't be like this

Before you begin

You may notice a familiar response before you can name the thought behind it. You apologise, over-prepare, keep the peace, go quiet or assume a change of plan means something about you. This workbook offers language for exploring those moments.

A behaviour does not prove that you hold a particular belief. You might act the same way for different reasons on different days. The explanations here are possibilities to recognise, question or leave aside, not descriptions you must accept about yourself.

Start with a title that feels relevant to your life today. Your worth does not depend on resolving the pattern you find there. You can want something to change while treating yourself as someone who deserves care and respect now. Read the entries that interest you and leave the others. The questions are there to help you reflect; choose the ones that give you something useful to consider. If a description feels wrong for you, trust that judgement.

The Pattern Explorer helps you recognise themes that may feel familiar, while the short beliefs quiz suggests individual entries based on the experiences you choose to explore. You can decide what feels relevant, explore another thread or browse the workbook. Neither is a psychological assessment or diagnosis.

You may recognise several beliefs, or even much of a section. Reading them together can reveal connections, although each may have a different history or meaning for you. Choose one manageable situation to begin with and let the other entries provide context.

Each entry includes a possible root, an everyday noticing prompt, a fuller explanation, three reflection questions and an optional deeper thread. The root is one interpretation, not a cause we can know on your behalf. You can use your own wording or leave it blank.

You can begin with something you notice in your life now. If an earlier experience comes to mind, you may wish to note it or explore it with support. There is no need to force a memory or establish exactly where the belief began. If reflection becomes distressing, leave it there and seek appropriate support. A workbook cannot assess whether a relationship or situation is safe for you.

You can understand a pattern without immediately changing it. For now, curiosity and one useful observation are enough.

How beliefs may develop

A belief can begin taking shape in childhood, through what people say to us, how we're treated and what we come to expect from those around us. As children, we have less experience to draw on when making sense of events, and may come to conclusions about ourselves that we carry into adult life. Beliefs can also develop or change through later experiences, relationships and social expectations. Some beliefs may once have helped you navigate difficult circumstances. Others may have been painful judgements from the beginning. Some will have no protective purpose that you recognise.

A conclusion can continue influencing expectations after circumstances change. Circumstances can also remain genuinely difficult. This workbook makes room for both: noticing your interpretation and taking the facts of your current life seriously.

A useful question is: "What am I concluding, what supports that conclusion, and what else needs attention?" Practical help, safer relationships, health care and changes to your circumstances may matter alongside reflection.

The pathway

- Step 1: Explore Your Beliefs. Use the Pattern Explorer to recognise broader themes, the short beliefs quiz to consider individual beliefs, or the workbook to find language for what you notice.
- Step 2: Learn to Tap. Use the Let It Go guide for the tapping points and basic sequence, then try one round.
- Step 3: Work With Your Pattern. If you have chosen a belief and are familiar with tapping, use the guided practice with one manageable example.

This workbook stands alone. You can finish with noticing, return later or seek support at any stage.

Support and further help

If you need urgent help

If someone is in immediate danger

Contact the emergency service where you are now, or go to the nearest emergency department.

This website and session bookings are not emergency services.

Find support where you are

These are short numbers. They only work inside the country shown.

New Zealand

Free emotional support, any time, from a New Zealand phone.

Call or text 1737

Australia

Lifeline. Crisis support, 24 hours a day, from an Australian phone.

Call 13 11 14

Canada

Suicide crisis support, 24 hours a day, from a Canadian phone.

Call or text 9-8-8

Ireland

Samaritans. Free, any time, from an Irish phone.

Call 116 123

United Kingdom

Samaritans. Free, any time, from a UK phone.

Call 116 123

United States

Suicide and crisis support, any time, from a United States phone.

Call or text 988

Somewhere else

Find A Helpline lists phone, text and online support for most countries.

findahelpline.com

Details checked 23 October 2026. Services can change; use the linked provider pages for current details. If one service is unavailable, try another through Find A Helpline.

Support with the workbook

You can bring a belief, a few notes or your own words to a conversation. A free 15-minute chat with Vicki is an optional place to discuss working together. It is not an emergency service.

SECTION 01

Self-worth, love and belonging

I am worthy.

These entries explore worth, failure, perfection, appearance, closeness and fear of being left, along with whether you feel wanted or able to belong. Each belief has its own meaning, even where experiences overlap.

IN THIS SECTION

1. I'm not good enough
2. I'm a failure
3. I can't accept myself
4. There's something wrong with me
5. I'm bad
6. I'm too much
7. I'm unattractive
8. I have to be hard on myself
9. I have to be perfect
10. I have to earn my place
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16. The people I love will leave me
17. I don't matter
18. I don't fit anywhere
19. I'm behind everyone else

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 1

1. I'm not good enough

Whatever you achieve, the feeling of falling short seems to follow. What would finally allow you to feel good enough?

Possible root:

As I am, I fall short. I need to do better, be better or become different before I can feel truly acceptable.

When achievements still don't feel good enough

Notice one moment you dismiss something you have done well or turn a difficulty into a judgement about yourself. What would you have needed to do for it to count as good enough?

The relief that never quite lasts

You finish something and immediately notice what could have been better. Someone thanks you, but you remember the part you struggled with. A mistake stays with you longer than the things you got right. Even when something goes well, the relief can be brief: you managed this time, but next time you will have to prove yourself again.

The words "good enough" may seem to describe your ability, but the judgement often reaches further. You are not simply asking whether you have the skills for a particular task. You are asking whether you are a good enough parent, partner, friend or person. Something you did becomes a verdict about who you are.

The standard may be difficult to name. Perhaps you should be more capable, more attractive, more patient or further ahead. You may compare yourself with someone whose strengths are visible while their struggles are not. Or you may compare yourself with an imagined version of you who always knows what to do and rarely needs help.

The tiring part is that the standard can move. What once would have pleased you becomes what you should have been doing all along. An achievement is followed by the next requirement. You keep gathering evidence, but it never quite settles the question.

You might work harder, prepare excessively or become someone others can always depend on. You might also put things off, avoid opportunities or stop yourself trying because falling short would feel too exposing. These different responses can sit alongside the same painful expectation: whatever you bring may not be good enough.

Sometimes the belief sounds like "Even my best efforts are not good enough." This version can be especially discouraging, because it rules out the usual remedy. If trying harder hasn't settled it, why try at all? You might give everything and still feel it falls short, or stop giving your best, so that a disappointing result says less about you. It can help to separate the effort from the outcome. Effort is yours to give. The outcome often depends on time, other people, resources and chance as well.

A standard that keeps moving

This differs from wanting to learn or do something well. A useful standard belongs to a particular task. It tells you what needs practice, information or attention. This belief turns that specific need into a judgement of your whole self. "I need help with this" becomes "I should be better than this."

It also differs from "There's something wrong with me", which centres on feeling fundamentally flawed. "I'm not good enough" centres on falling short, often with the hope that enough improvement might finally make you acceptable. "I'm unlovable" asks whether someone could love you as you are. You may recognise more than one of these, but they do not have to mean the same thing.

Sometimes "not good enough" doesn't stay a question of standards. When the hoped-for improvement never seems to arrive, or when falling short has hurt or disappointed someone, the judgement can drop a level: "I'm not good enough" becomes "I'm bad." This is more likely if being good enough once meant being good, keeping others happy, not causing trouble or never being a burden. Then missing the standard was never only about ability. It felt like doing something wrong. If this is where the belief goes for you, "I'm bad" has its own page.

Perhaps praise once depended heavily on achievement, behaviour or making other people happy. Perhaps you were compared, criticised or expected to manage more than you could reasonably manage. Later experiences can shape this judgement too.

For some people the standard belongs to one particular relationship: "I will never be good enough for my parents." You may have achieved a great deal and still feel the same tightening when you imagine their reaction. Their approval can remain the measure, even when you no longer agree with what they value.

The harshest version may sound like "I'm worthless" or "I'm inadequate." These are judgements about your worth, not a fair measure of one action or ability.

Being good enough does not mean being equally skilled at everything, always getting things right or having nothing left to learn. You can acknowledge a mistake, make a repair or develop a skill while remaining someone who deserves care and respect. Growth does not have to be the price of your acceptability.

Begin with one ordinary situation. What actually needed doing? What did you contribute? What still needs attention? Try to keep those answers specific. If something needs improving, let it be that thing, rather than your whole worth.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 1

1. I'm not good enough

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When I say "I'm not good enough", what am I expecting myself to be or do?

2. What have I achieved, offered or handled that I haven't really given myself credit for?

3. What would I approach differently if my worth were already settled, even while I was learning?

Optional deeper thread: What am I hoping being "good enough" would finally allow me to receive or feel?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 2

2. I'm a failure

Possible root:

What didn't work out defines me. When I fail at something, that says what I am.

Feeling like a failure after something didn't work out

Notice one moment when "that didn't work" became "I'm a failure." Which outcome were you thinking of, and what did it come to stand for?

When the verdict feels already decided

You might trace it to something specific: a course you didn't finish, a business that closed, a relationship that ended, a job you lost or a plan that never got going. You might trace it to a quieter collection of things that didn't turn out as you hoped. Either way, the outcome stops being an event in your life and starts to feel like a description of you.

Sometimes the words are "I'm a disappointment." One outcome can begin to feel like a verdict not only on what you attempted but also on the person you are to others.

You may find it hard to talk about what happened, or tell the story quickly so nobody lingers on it. New attempts can feel risky, because another setback would seem to confirm what you already suspect. Successes may barely register. They feel like exceptions, while the failures feel like the truth.

The word itself does a lot of work. "I failed the exam" describes something that happened at a particular time, under particular conditions. "I'm a failure" turns it into a permanent trait and carries it into every area of your life, including ones that have nothing to do with it.

When an outcome becomes a verdict

Unlike "I'm not good enough", which keeps measuring and striving, this belief can feel like the measuring is over and the result is in. Unlike "I'm behind everyone else", it isn't mainly about timing. It is about what an outcome says about you. Unlike "It's too late for me", it may still allow that things could change, while insisting that the past has already decided who you are. And unlike "I'm bad", it is usually a judgement of capability and success rather than moral worth, although the two can blur.

The belief can grow where success was treated as the main source of approval, where mistakes were met with shame rather than support, or where one outcome carried enormous weight for the family. It can also follow later losses, especially those that happened in public or affected other people.

Attempts that fail are part of almost every life that involves trying anything. An outcome happened. It had causes, some of which may have been within your control and many of which weren't. You can learn from it, grieve it or make amends where they're needed without letting it become your name.

Choose one outcome you count against yourself. Write down what you were attempting, what got in the way and what you knew at the time. Then write one thing the attempt shows about you that has nothing to do with whether it succeeded, such as the courage it took to begin, what you cared about or what you kept going through.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 2

2. I'm a failure

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Which outcome or outcomes do I use as evidence that I'm a failure?

2. What were the conditions at the time, including what I didn't know and what was outside my control?

3. What have I attempted, kept going with or recovered from that this belief leaves out?

Optional deeper thread: Who would I be allowed to be if a failed attempt were just something that happened, rather than who I am?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 3

3. I can't accept myself

Possible root:

Some parts of me feel unacceptable. If I make room for them, I worry that I am approving of them or giving up on changing.

Judging yourself for what you feel and need

Notice one small moment you judge yourself for a feeling, a need or something you find difficult. What did you tell yourself you should not feel, need or be?

When a feeling becomes a reason to judge yourself

You notice envy when someone shares good news, need reassurance after a difficult day or see something about your body that you wish were different. Before you have had time to understand your response, another one arrives: "I shouldn't be like this." What you feel becomes something you must hide, correct or push away.

There can be two difficulties in the same moment: the sadness, anger, embarrassment or need, and the judgement that having it makes you unacceptable. You may be trying to manage the original feeling while also trying to become someone who would never have it.

The effort can be hard to see from outside. You may seem thoughtful, capable or easy to be around. Inside, you are continually deciding which parts of your experience are allowed a voice. The generous part is welcome; the envious part must disappear. The capable part can be seen; the part that needs help must stay hidden. Even a feeling you would understand in a friend can seem intolerable in you.

Sometimes acceptance sounds dangerous because it seems to mean approval. If you stop condemning your anger, will you excuse hurting someone? If you acknowledge a mistake without attacking yourself, will you stop taking responsibility? If you accept your body as it is today, will you have to give up wanting care or change?

Accepting that an experience is here does not mean endorsing every action it could lead to. You can acknowledge anger and choose not to act hurtfully. You can regret something you did, repair what you can and still treat yourself as a person worth caring for. You can recognise your body's present needs while seeking treatment or making changes that matter to you. Acceptance leaves room for responsibility, boundaries and growth.

Acceptance leaves room for growth

This differs from "I'm not good enough", where the question is whether you meet a standard. Here, it is whether you can allow yourself to have a particular feeling, need, limitation or history. Achieving more may leave that question untouched.

"There's something wrong with me" turns a difficulty or difference into evidence of a fundamental flaw. "I can't accept myself" concerns how you respond to what you find: rejecting it, arguing with it or making care conditional on its disappearance. These experiences can overlap. "I'm unlovable" asks whether someone else could love you as you are.

Self-acceptance lets you acknowledge what is here. Self-love includes how you treat yourself when what you find is difficult. You might accept that you are struggling and still deny yourself care, or acknowledge a mistake while allowing yourself only criticism.

Unconditional self-love means that care does not have to be withdrawn when you disappoint yourself. You can take responsibility, make changes and remain someone worth caring for now. If love feels unfamiliar, a small act of kindness can be a place to begin. You do not have to achieve self-acceptance or self-love before you deserve love and support from others.

Perhaps a feeling, difference or need once met criticism, ridicule or silence. Perhaps you learned to divide yourself into what was welcome and what caused difficulty. Later experiences may also have shaped this response.

Begin with something small enough to approach gently. Perhaps you were disappointed about a changed plan and immediately called yourself selfish. Could you first acknowledge, "I was looking forward to that, and I'm disappointed"? You can decide what to do next without first arguing yourself out of having a feeling.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 3

3. I can’t accept myself

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What feeling, need or difficulty do I most quickly tell myself I should not have?

2. What do I fear would happen if I stopped criticising myself for it? Am I confusing acknowledgement with approval or giving up?

3. What care could I offer myself now, without waiting for this feeling, need or difficulty to disappear?

Optional deeper thread: Have I made being kind to myself something I can do only after I have changed?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 4

4. There's something wrong with me

Possible root:

A difficulty or difference reveals a fundamental flaw in me. If people saw it clearly, I might not be accepted.

When ordinary difficulties feel like personal flaws

Catch one moment "That was difficult" becomes "There is something wrong with me". What happened between the event and that conclusion?

When a difficulty becomes a verdict

You make a mistake and feel that something has been exposed. Other people seem to have awkward moments; yours feel like evidence. A conversation goes badly, you need more time than expected or you react strongly, and the explanation arrives quickly: the problem is you.

Sometimes this verdict sounds like "I'm permanently damaged" or "I'm broken", particularly after painful or frightening experiences. What happened to you can leave real effects without defining who you are.

This is more than recognising an area where you need help. It turns a particular difficulty into a statement about your whole self. "I don't understand this yet" becomes "Everyone else knows how to be a person and I don't".

You may hide what you find difficult, study other people for instructions or work hard to seem unaffected. You may also avoid situations where the supposed flaw could be seen. Those responses can make it harder to discover how much uncertainty and struggle other people experience too.

Describing the difficulty without the judgement

Unlike "I'm not good enough", this belief is not mainly about missing a standard. It is about feeling defective. Unlike "I'm unlovable", it may concern being normal, competent or acceptable more broadly, rather than love specifically.

There may be experiences of being criticised, misunderstood or treated as a problem. Differences in learning, health, culture or how you experience the world can also be misread by others. None of that establishes a defect in your worth.

For example, losing track in a fast conversation might mean you need a slower explanation or a moment to think. If you call yourself "wrong", there is little to ask for except becoming a different person. Naming the difficulty gives you something more useful to work with: "Could you go through that last part again?"

Try describing a recent difficulty without the verdict. Perhaps you were overwhelmed, lacked information, needed an accommodation or made a mistake you can address. A precise description can leave room for support and responsibility that “I’m fundamentally wrong” does not.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 4

4. There's something wrong with me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What ordinary difficulty have I recently treated as evidence about my whole self?

2. What facts describe that situation without calling me defective?

3. What help, information or adjustment might be useful if I did not have to hide the difficulty?

Optional deeper thread: Am I interpreting a need for support as proof that I should not need support?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 5

5. I'm bad

Possible root:

Underneath everything, I am wrong in a moral sense. When things go badly, it shows what I really am.

Feeling like a bad person, even when nothing has happened

Catch one moment when something you did, or failed to do, turned into "I'm bad." What did you actually do, and what verdict did you add?

When the judgement goes to the core

Someone is upset with you and the feeling arrives before any explanation: you've done something wrong, and it's because of what you are. A small lapse, like a forgotten message, a sharp tone or a need you couldn't meet, can feel like evidence. Even an argument you didn't start can leave you searching for the part that was your fault.

You may be very careful to be good. You might apologise quickly, keep the peace, give more than you have or watch closely for signs that you've caused harm. Praise can be hard to take in, because it seems to describe someone you're only pretending to be. If people knew the real you, you suspect they would see it too.

At its harshest this belief may sound like "I'm shameful" or "I can't be trusted." The judgement becomes an identity, rather than pointing to a specific action you can take responsibility for.

This belief often feels like conscience, but it works differently. Conscience points at something particular: "I spoke harshly and I need to apologise." It is specific, and it shows you a way to make things right. "I'm bad" points at your whole self. It offers no repair except becoming someone else, so the feeling can stay long after any amends have been made.

Responsibility is different from identity

Unlike "I'm not good enough", this belief is not mainly about falling short of a standard, and it doesn't hold out the hope that more effort will settle it. Unlike "There's something wrong with me", it is less about being defective or different and more about being wrong in a moral sense. Unlike "It was my fault" or "I can't forgive myself", it may not be attached to any particular event. It can feel true even when nothing has happened.

The belief often begins early. Children who are criticised, punished harshly, blamed for adults' moods or treated badly usually can't conclude that the adults are getting it wrong. It can feel safer to decide "I'm bad". That keeps the world predictable and holds out the hope that being better might make things better. What made sense to a child can still be running long after the circumstances have changed.

Worrying that you may have done harm can be painful, especially when you hold yourself to impossible standards. You can still take responsibility for real harm. Responsibility belongs to what you did, and it can be acknowledged and repaired.

Choose one recent moment that brought this feeling. Describe what you did in plain terms, as if for someone fair-minded. Is there anything that needs repairing? If so, what is the specific next step? Then notice whether "I'm bad" adds anything to that step, or only makes it heavier to take.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 5

5. I'm bad

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When does "I'm bad" tend to show up, and what has usually just happened?

2. If I describe a recent moment without the verdict, what did I actually do, and is there anything specific to repair?

3. Whose voice or treatment does this belief remind me of, and was that a fair judge of a child?

Optional deeper thread: What do I fear would happen if I stopped believing I'm bad? What might the belief be protecting me or someone else from?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 6

6. I'm too much

Possible root:

My feelings, needs or way of being exceed what people will accept. I must reduce or edit myself to stay connected.

Holding back your feelings before others respond

Notice one moment you soften an enthusiasm, withhold a preference or apologise for a feeling before anyone has responded. What reaction are you anticipating?

Making yourself smaller

You start a sentence, then shorten it. You are excited about something, but check whether your enthusiasm is becoming inconvenient. You need reassurance and decide you have already used your share. Before another person responds, you may have begun making yourself easier to accommodate.

Sometimes there are remembered descriptions: intense, sensitive, demanding, dramatic. Sometimes there was no label, only the experience that your feelings seemed to exceed the space available for them. Those experiences may help explain the expectation, but they do not define the correct amount of person you are allowed to be.

Consideration and self-erasure can look similar from outside. Consideration asks about timing, consent and the other person's capacity. Self-erasure assumes your feelings should not need space at all. You may be good at reading the room while finding it difficult to know what you would have said without the editing.

Room for your way of being

"I'm not good enough" imagines a shortfall. "I'm too much" imagines an excess. Both can involve acceptance, but they place the supposed problem differently. This belief can also sit beside "It's not safe for me to be angry", although it may apply equally to joy, affection, questions or ambition.

Your feelings and another person's capacity both matter. You can acknowledge what you feel and choose a considerate way to express it. Someone saying "I can't talk now" need not become "You are too much to care about".

Choose a person and situation where respectful expression is possible. You might state one preference without a long apology, or ask whether there is room for a conversation. Notice the difference between respecting a boundary and deciding your need was wrong.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 6

6. I'm too much

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What part of myself do I edit most quickly, and around whom?

2. Am I responding to this person's actual capacity or predicting rejection before checking?

3. How could I express one feeling or preference clearly and considerately?

Optional deeper thread: Have I confused someone's limited capacity with a limit on what I am allowed to feel?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 7

7. I'm unattractive

Possible root:

The way I look makes me less acceptable or less lovable. Unless I can change or hide my appearance, people won't want to be close to me.

Feeling unattractive or unhappy with how you look

Notice one moment you judged yourself by how you look. What did you see, and what did you decide it meant about your place with other people?

When the mirror has the final say

You see a photo of yourself and look for the flaw before anything else. You might avoid cameras, mirrors, swimming or certain clothes. You might cancel plans on days when you feel you look wrong. A compliment can be hard to believe, while a passing comment about your appearance can stay with you for years.

For some people the belief carries a condition: "I need to look great to be attractive." Being acceptable then depends on effort that never finishes, such as getting ready for a long time, keeping up a certain image or never being seen without preparation. Looking ordinary, tired or unprepared can feel like being exposed.

Appearance does affect how people are treated, and some people face real unkindness, discrimination or narrow standards about how they should look. That deserves acknowledgement. The belief goes further when it turns appearance into a judgement about whether you can be loved, wanted or taken seriously, and when it leaves little room for the many other things that draw people to each other.

When appearance stands in for worth

Unlike "My body lets me down", the concern is less about what your body can do and more about how it looks and how you imagine it is seen. Unlike "I'm unlovable", the doubt may attach to the outside rather than the whole self, although the two often overlap.

Unlike "I'm too much", it isn't mainly about reducing your expression, but about being visible at all.

The belief can grow from teasing or comments about your looks, from being compared with a sibling or friend, or from growing up around someone who was very focused on their own appearance or yours. It can grow from media, social media and cultures that tie worth to a narrow look, and from experiences linked to weight, skin, disability, ageing, gender or race. It can also follow changes in your body through illness, pregnancy, injury or age.

If thoughts about your appearance are closely tied to eating, exercise or checking your body, or if they take up a lot of your day, it may help to talk with a health professional who works in this area. This entry is about how you see yourself, not about changing how you look.

Try noticing what you value in the people you love. How much of it is about how they look? Then notice one thing someone values in you that has nothing to do with your appearance, and whether you allow it to count.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 7

7. I'm unattractive

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When do I feel most unattractive, and what do I stop doing or avoid when I feel that way?

2. Whose voice or which comments do I hear when I judge my appearance?

3. What do the people who care about me seem to value in me, beyond how I look?

Optional deeper thread: What would I allow myself to do, wear or enjoy if my appearance no longer decided whether I was acceptable?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 8

8. I have to be hard on myself

Possible root:

Without criticism or pressure I will become careless, selfish or ineffective. Kindness would let me get away with too much.

The harsh things you say to yourself after a mistake

Catch one harsh sentence after a mistake. What useful action does it ask for, and what does it add that is simply an attack?

When kindness feels like letting yourself off

Something goes wrong and you speak to yourself in a way you would hesitate to use with someone you love. The tone may feel ordinary because you have heard it internally for so long. You might call it honesty, discipline or refusing to make excuses.

The belief underneath can be that harshness is necessary. If you stop criticising, perhaps you will stop trying. If you acknowledge how difficult something was, perhaps you will avoid responsibility. Kindness seems to threaten the standards you care about.

Yet an insult and an instruction are different things. “I need to check that detail next time” identifies a change. “I’m useless” gives you a judgement without a method. You can examine what happened closely without adding contempt.

Responsibility without self-attack

This differs from “I’m not good enough”. There, the concern is inadequacy. Here, the concern is how you must manage yourself to prevent inadequacy or wrongdoing. You may feel capable and still believe that constant pressure is what keeps you that way.

The tone may resemble messages you have heard from others, or it may be a habit you developed yourself. Consider whether it helps you take a useful next step, and how you feel after speaking to yourself that way.

Try rewriting one criticism as a fair description and a specific action, keeping the consequences in view. “I missed the appointment. I need to apologise and change my reminder” can be both kinder and more accountable than a verdict about your character.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 8

8. I have to be hard on myself

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What is the last harsh sentence I used, and what am I afraid would happen without that tone?

2. Which part identifies a real problem, and which part attacks me as a person?

3. How would I give the same feedback firmly and respectfully to someone I wanted to help?

Optional deeper thread: Do I trust myself to act responsibly without being threatened from within?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 9

9. I have to be perfect

Possible root:

Anything less than perfect is a failure. If I make a mistake or leave something unfinished, I'll be criticised, rejected or exposed.

Struggling to finish because it isn't perfect

Notice one task you went over again and again, or put off because you couldn't do it perfectly. What were you afraid would happen if it was simply good?

When the standard leaves no room to breathe

You reread the email five times before sending it. You redo something that was already fine. You notice the one small error on a page that is otherwise right, and it's the only thing you can think about. Finishing can feel impossible, because there is always one more thing to improve.

Sometimes perfectionism looks like high achievement. Sometimes it looks like the opposite: putting things off, avoiding new challenges or never starting, because if you can't do it perfectly it feels safer not to try. Both can come from the same rule.

It can extend to how you treat people: "I have to please everyone." Every request gets a yes. Every disappointment feels like your failure to manage. You may work hard to make sure nobody is ever unhappy with you, which is a standard no one can meet.

Caring about quality is valuable. Some work does need precision, and attention to detail can be a real strength. The belief is different. It says mistakes are unacceptable rather than ordinary, and it links your worth or safety to getting everything right.

The rule beneath perfection

Unlike "I'm not good enough", which questions your worth, this belief sets the rule you live by to protect it. Unlike "I have to be hard on myself", which is about how you treat yourself after a mistake, this one is about trying to prevent mistakes from happening at all. Unlike "I'm responsible for how other people feel", the pleasing is driven by fear of criticism rather than by a sense that others' emotions are yours to manage, although the two often overlap.

It can grow where love or approval depended on achievement, where mistakes were met with anger, ridicule or punishment, or where being flawless was the safest way to avoid attention. It can also grow from praise that focused on results rather than effort, or from a household where one person's mood depended on everything going right.

Try choosing one low-stakes task and deciding beforehand what "good enough" looks like. Do it to that standard and stop. Notice what you feel, and what actually happens afterwards.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 9

9. I have to be perfect

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Where in my life do I most need things to be perfect, and what do I fear would happen if they weren't?

2. What has perfectionism cost me in time, rest, relationships or things I never started?

3. What would "good enough" look like for one thing I'm working on now?

Optional deeper thread: Who first taught me that mistakes weren't safe, and do I still need to protect myself from them in the same way?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 10

10. I have to earn my place

Possible root:

My contribution is what makes me welcome. Without being useful, I cannot rely on belonging.

Feeling you must be useful to be welcome

Notice when you begin helping before allowing yourself to enjoy being included. What do you imagine would happen if you contributed less on this occasion?

A place you have to keep earning

You arrive with something to offer. You organise, help clear up, remember what is needed or make yourself available. These can be expressions of generosity you genuinely enjoy. The question is what happens when giving no longer feels optional.

Perhaps you are tired but keep finding jobs. You receive an invitation and immediately think about what to bring or how to repay it. If you are unwell or have less to give, you may worry that your place in the relationship will become uncertain.

This belief can turn belonging into an ongoing arrangement you must maintain through contribution. Appreciation feels reassuring, but it may also strengthen the idea that usefulness is the reason people keep you close. Being welcomed while doing nothing can feel less secure than being busy on someone else's behalf.

At its sharpest the belief can sound like "I'm of no use to anyone." If your place depends on being useful, a time when you can't help, contribute or give can feel like losing your reason to be there at all.

Your company can be enough

Unlike "I'm unwanted", the central question is not simply whether people choose you. It is what you believe you must provide for that choice to continue. Unlike "I have to do it all", the focus is not the task itself, but what carrying it might buy you in connection.

Real relationships involve mutual care and shared effort. How evenly is that effort shared in yours? Receiving, having limits and sometimes needing support are part of mutual care too.

Giving can hold more than one intention. You may genuinely care and also hope that being helpful will secure your place. Notice whether you feel free to give less, ask for something yourself or receive a response you did not hope for. Wanting affection and reciprocity is understandable; those needs can be named directly.

In a relationship that has shown care beyond what you do, notice one invitation or kindness you have treated as a job offer. Could you accept a modest amount of hospitality without immediately working for it? You can still choose to help. The difference is whether your place seems to depend on it.

If your question is whether care can remain through disappointment, explore "I can't love someone I'm disappointed in".

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 10

10. I have to earn my place

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I believe I must provide to remain welcome?

2. How do I respond when I am unable to contribute, and what do others actually do?

3. Where could I practise receiving a little of the care I readily offer?

Optional deeper thread: Can I imagine someone enjoying my presence without needing a service from me?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 11

11. I don't deserve good things

Possible root:

Good things may be available to other people, but I do not have the same right to enjoy them. Receiving more than the bare minimum feels undeserved.

When good things feel wrong to accept

Notice one moment something welcome becomes uncomfortable. Are you concerned about a real cost or consequence, or does having something good simply feel wrong for you?

Something good, but not for you

You receive recognition and quickly explain why someone else deserved it more. There is an opportunity you would enjoy, but you feel you should leave it for someone better. A relationship offers warmth and steadiness, yet part of you questions whether you are entitled to be treated so well.

The difficulty may remain even when you trust the offer and know you could make use of it. You are not necessarily expecting a hidden cost or doubting your ability. Something about being the person who gets to have it feels uncomfortable.

You might minimise an achievement, feel guilty about a pleasure or make something harder than it needs to be before allowing yourself to enjoy it. Perhaps a good moment brings a reminder of your mistakes, of someone else who is struggling or of how much you still have to prove.

For some people the belief carries a condition: "I need to earn happiness." Happiness feels allowed once the work is finished, the weight is lost, the house is sorted or everyone else is looked after. Until then, enjoying yourself can feel premature or even irresponsible. The trouble is that the conditions tend to renew themselves, so the permission keeps being postponed. You might notice the words "I'll be happy when…" and ask whether happiness has to wait for that, or whether some of it could be part of the way there.

It can be even more direct: "Feeling good is not okay," or "I shouldn't be enjoying myself." A pleasant moment can bring guilt before you've had the chance to enjoy it. "I don't deserve the things I want" belongs here too, when the wanting itself feels like asking too much. At its harshest the belief can sound like "I deserve to be miserable."

It can also shape what you hope for: "I should settle for whatever I can get." Asking for more, or waiting for something that suits you better, can feel greedy or unrealistic, so you accept less than you want without quite noticing.

Those responses can have different meanings. Choosing to share, declining an unsuitable opportunity or finding it difficult to enjoy something does not prove that you hold this belief. The useful question is whether you recognise a judgement that good things should not be for you, even when the circumstances would allow them.

Deserving, safety and belonging

"I'm not good enough" centres on falling short of a standard. Here, you may know you are capable and still feel that a good outcome is not yours to have. "I have to earn my place" concerns what you must contribute to belong. This belief can remain even when your place feels secure.

"It's not safe for me to receive" asks what accepting something might cost you. "I don't deserve good things" asks whether you should be allowed to have it at all. "I don't deserve rest" is a more specific expression: here, the same judgement may extend to affection, enjoyment, recognition, comfort or opportunity.

You may have learned that pleasure was selfish, that your needs mattered less or that mistakes cancelled your right to anything good. You may recognise a different history, or no clear beginning. Notice the rule you apply now without needing to explain its origin.

Making room for something welcome

Having good things in your life does not require a perfect record. You can take responsibility for something you regret and also allow care, ordinary enjoyment and a future that contains more than making up for the past.

This is not a claim to someone else's affection, money or agreement. Other people's choices and fair limits still matter. It is an invitation to notice whether you deny yourself something freely offered or reasonably available because being the recipient feels wrong.

Begin with something small: let a compliment stand, enjoy a moment of comfort or acknowledge something you did well. Notice the objection that arrives. You do not have to force gratitude or convince yourself that everything feels good. You can simply allow the welcome thing a little space before explaining why it should belong to someone else.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 11

11. I don't deserve good things

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What good thing do I find difficult to let myself have, even when it is safe and available?

2. What do I think I would need to do, change or make up for before I deserved it?

3. Could I allow one small welcome thing today without first proving that I have earned it?

Optional deeper thread: If I accepted that good things could belong in my life, what judgement about myself would I have to question?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 12

12. I'm unlovable

Possible root:

There is something about the real me that makes me difficult or impossible to love. If someone knew me fully, their affection would not last.

Struggling to believe someone could love you

Notice one moment you explain away someone's affection, hide a part of yourself or become uneasy when someone treats you warmly. What do you imagine would happen if you let their care count?

When affection is hard to believe

You may believe that someone appreciates your kindness, enjoys your company or values what you do for them, while struggling to believe that they love you. Their affection seems attached to the version of you they have seen so far. Somewhere underneath sits the worry that knowing you more fully would change their mind.

This can make being needed feel more understandable than being loved. You know why someone needs your help. It is harder to explain why they would choose closeness with you when you are tired, struggling or offering nothing in return.

You might keep parts of yourself carefully out of view. A feeling that seems too difficult. A need that seems too demanding. Something you regret. When affection arrives, you may think, "You wouldn't say that if you really knew me." Or you may seek reassurance, feel comforted for a while, then find the doubt returning.

For some people the fear is quieter than rejection: "Once someone knows me, they'll lose interest." You may feel you're at your most interesting at the start, while there's still something new to discover. As time goes on, you expect to become ordinary, dull or simply less appealing than whoever comes next. A slower reply or a quieter evening can seem like the beginning of the fade. You might keep moving on before it happens, keep reinventing yourself or work hard to stay entertaining. Interest naturally changes as a relationship becomes familiar. Settling into ease is often a sign of closeness rather than the end of it. Sometimes it sounds simply like "I'm uninteresting."

The belief often surfaces after a loss: "If I get divorced, or get hurt again, nobody will ever want me." An ending can feel like proof that you are now less lovable, or that whatever you had to offer has been used up. Grief after a relationship ends is real. It is not the same as evidence about your future.

Care you can allow to count

This differs from "I'm not good enough". That belief measures whether you meet a standard. "I'm unlovable" questions whether you can be loved as a person, even when you meet the standard. Being successful, helpful or admired may not answer that question.

Sometimes this conclusion is connected with care that felt absent, inconsistent or conditional. There may have been rejection or experiences that left you ashamed. Another person's difficulty caring for you does not establish that you were difficult to love.

Being loved as a person need not depend on being useful, easy or without faults. That is one way to understand unconditional love. Someone can care about you and still disagree with a choice, need time alone or set a limit. Those things do not automatically mean their love has gone. At the same time, a claim of love does not make hurtful behaviour acceptable. You can look at how someone treats you as well as what they say.

The invitation here is gentle: notice when affection becomes something you must disprove or protect yourself from. With someone who has shown themselves to be respectful and trustworthy, can you recognise one caring action without immediately explaining why it does not count?

Choose how much to share and with whom. Someone who respects those choices gives you a chance to notice what receiving care feels like.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 12

12. I'm unlovable

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I imagine someone would discover that would make them stop loving me?

2. When someone shows care, what explanation do I give myself for it?

3. What would receiving that particular kindness look like without needing to earn or repay it?

Optional deeper thread: Is love something I believe other people can receive simply as themselves, while I have to qualify for it?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 13

13. I'm no good at love

Possible root:

I'm not made for closeness. Something in me means I can't love well, and anyone who gets close to me will be worse off for it.

Feeling you're no good at relationships

Notice one moment you held back from a relationship, or explained an ending, by deciding you're just not suited to it. What happened, and what conclusion did you draw about yourself?

When closeness feels like something other people do

You might say it lightly: "I'm not a relationship person," or "I'm better on my own." It can sound like a preference, and sometimes it is. For some people, though, it's a conclusion reached after relationships that ended painfully, or after feeling numb, restless or trapped when someone got close.

Some people put it as "I'm incapable of lasting relationships." A run of endings can start to feel like proof about you, rather than a history worth understanding.

The belief can go deeper: "I'm incapable of loving others," or "I'm bad for my partner." You may notice that you pull away when things become serious, struggle to show affection or feel unsure whether what you feel counts as love. After an argument or a hurt you caused, you might decide the other person would be better off without you. Ending things can then feel like protecting them rather than losing something yourself.

Choosing not to have a romantic relationship can be a healthy and fulfilling choice, and many people live full, connected lives without one. The belief is different. It isn't a free choice. It is a verdict that closeness is closed to you, or that you would only cause harm, which may leave you lonely while telling you there's nothing to be done.

Your ability to love is not a fixed verdict

Unlike "I'm unlovable", the doubt is less about whether you can be loved and more about whether you can love, or love safely. Unlike "I'm safer on my own", the reason for distance is less about protecting yourself and more about what you believe you lack or would do to someone else. Unlike "I'm bad", it applies to closeness specifically, although the two can overlap.

It can grow where love at home was absent, unpredictable or tangled up with conflict, so there was little chance to see or practise steady affection. It can follow relationships in which you were told you were cold, difficult or damaging, or in which you did hurt someone and haven't found a way to make sense of it. Shutting down feelings to cope with earlier pain can also make it hard to feel close later, without meaning you're incapable of it.

If you have harmed a partner, that deserves honest attention, and support can help you understand what happened and change it. Responsibility for particular behaviour is different from a fixed belief that you can only ever cause harm.

Try looking at the forms of care you already give, to friends, family, animals, work or community. What does that care look like? Which parts of it might also belong in a close relationship, if you wanted one?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 13

13. I'm no good at love

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When did I first decide I was no good at love, and what was happening then?

2. Is being on my own something I'm choosing, or something I've decided I'm stuck with?

3. What ways of caring for others do I already have, even if they don't feel like "love"?

Optional deeper thread: If I did have the capacity for closeness, what would I be afraid of finding out or of losing?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 14

14. I can't love someone I'm disappointed in

Possible root:

Love and approval belong together. If I am disappointed in someone, showing care would seem to excuse what they did. If someone is disappointed in me, I assume their love has gone too.

When disappointment makes affection difficult

Notice one ordinary disappointment in a relationship you value. What happens to the affection you feel able to offer or receive? Are you needing time, setting a limit or feeling that love must wait until everything is put right?

When love feels all or nothing

Someone you care about makes a choice you dislike. A friend disagrees with you, a family member takes a different path or a partner lets you down. Alongside the disappointment, another question appears: can you still be loving while this remains unresolved?

Perhaps warmth feels like surrender. If you are kind now, they might think the problem no longer matters. If you enjoy their company, you might seem to be approving of their decision. You hold back affection until they understand, apologise or change, because allowing it sooner would seem to weaken what you need to say.

The same rule can work in the receiving direction. Someone is upset with you and you find it difficult to believe that their care remains. A disagreement feels like the withdrawal of love. Even a reasonable limit can seem to say something larger about whether you still matter to them.

This differs from "I'm unlovable", which questions whether you can be loved as a person. Here, you may know that love was present and believe disappointment must cancel it. It also differs from "I have to earn my place", where your contribution seems to secure belonging. The question here is whether love can remain when approval does not.

Care can leave room for disagreement

Perhaps affection once depended on being agreeable, successful or easy to manage. After a mistake, warmth may have disappeared until you had made things right. You may have learned to read approval as the evidence of love, or to withdraw affection as the clearest way to show that something mattered.

Unconditional love allows care for a person to extend beyond whether they are currently pleasing you. Their worth need not rise and fall with your approval, just as yours need not depend on theirs. You can care about someone and still disagree with a choice, ask for a repair or decide what you are willing to be part of.

Love, affection and closeness may not all feel available at the same moment. You may need time before warmth returns. You do not have to perform affection, accept touch or make yourself love someone. A pause to settle, think or protect yourself is different from a rule that love can resume only when the other person has earned it back.

Unconditional love does not mean unconditional access. Repeated harm, coercion or disregard for your needs calls for attention to what is happening. You can care for someone while limiting contact or ending a relationship. Receiving love also leaves you free to say no; someone's claim to love you does not settle whether their behaviour is acceptable.

Begin with one manageable disagreement in a relationship where your choices are respected. You might say, "I care about you. I'm still upset about what happened, and I want us to talk about it." Notice whether both parts can be true. If the other person is disappointed in you, consider whether their actions still show care rather than deciding from their mood alone.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 14

14. I can't love someone I'm disappointed in

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I fear showing care would imply while I am disappointed in someone?

2. When someone is disappointed in me, what tells me about their care beyond that one feeling or disagreement?

3. What could love and a clear limit look like together in one relationship I want to keep?

Optional deeper thread: Do I treat love as something we must keep earning from each other, or can it leave room for being imperfect people?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 15

15. I'm unwanted

Possible root:

People may tolerate or include me, but they do not really choose me. My presence is something they accept rather than welcome.

Wondering whether people really want you around

Notice one moment an invitation, delayed reply or change of plan becomes a conclusion about whether someone wants you around. What happened, and what meaning did you give it?

Included, but unsure you are wanted

An invitation arrives, and you wonder whether it was offered out of politeness. Someone says they would like to see you, but you wait for them to suggest a date before believing it. You may feel included while still wondering whether anyone would have chosen your company without a reason to be courteous.

The distinction can feel very precise. Being allowed to come is not the same as feeling wanted there.

You might hold back from making contact because initiating feels like imposing. Or you may do the opposite, making the plans, sending the messages and keeping the connection moving because you fear it would disappear if you stopped. Either way, the question remains: "Would they reach for me?"

Attention can settle on the small details of being chosen. Who remembered. Who followed up. Whether someone sounded pleased or merely agreeable. An unanswered message may feel like confirmation before you know what happened at the other end.

Recognising welcome and mutual interest

This differs from "I'm unlovable". You may believe someone could love you once they knew you, yet doubt that they would think to invite you closer. It is also different from "I have to earn my place", although the two can overlap. Here, the central hurt is feeling unchosen. If you feel welcomed but still cannot be yourself, I don't fit anywhere explores that different experience.

There may have been real exclusion, rejection or repeated experiences of being overlooked. Those experiences deserve acknowledgement. The question is whether a particular experience has become an expectation you now carry into other relationships too.

Some relationships are one-sided, and an exclusion may genuinely hurt. Take that seriously. There is room to ask both: “Is this person making space for me?” and “Am I able to recognise welcome when it is offered?”

A beginning might be accepting a clear invitation without seeking additional proof, or expressing interest to someone who has shown reciprocal care. Notice the people who make room for your company, and how it feels to accept their welcome.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 15

15. I'm unwanted

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What tells me that an invitation is genuine, and do I allow that evidence to count?

2. When I want contact, do I hold back, work harder for it or respond in another way?

3. Which relationships show mutual interest, and which leave me doing most of the reaching?

Optional deeper thread: Have I made being someone's first choice the only form of welcome I can believe?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 16

16. The people I love will leave me

Possible root:

Closeness doesn't last. Sooner or later the people I love will go, and the more I love them, the more it will hurt.

Fear that the people you love will leave

Notice one moment a small sign, such as a late reply, a change of plan or a quieter mood, felt like the beginning of someone leaving. What happened, and what did you expect would follow?

When you're waiting for the ending

Things are going well, and that's when the worry starts. You notice every change in tone and wonder whether it means something. A partner wanting an evening to themselves, a friend who is busy for a few weeks, or a family member moving away can feel less like ordinary life and more like the first step towards losing them.

You might hold on tightly: seeking reassurance, keeping close track of contact or finding it hard to let people have space. Or you might do the opposite and keep some distance, so the loss won't hurt as much when it comes. Some people end relationships first, before they can be left. Others stay in relationships that don't serve them, because being alone feels worse than being unhappy.

You may find that you need other people to feel good, so that your sense of being okay rises and falls with their attention, approval or presence. Time alone can feel empty or unsettling rather than restful.

People do leave, and relationships do end. Some losses are sudden, painful and undeserved. The belief makes a broader prediction: that every connection is temporary, that leaving is only a matter of time and that nothing you or they do will change that. "No relationship lasts" can feel like realism, but it can also stop you from noticing the relationships that have lasted.

Being loved now, fearing loss later

Unlike "I'm unwanted", this belief may accept that someone chooses you now. The fear is that they won't keep choosing you. Unlike "I'm unlovable", it doesn't always say anything about your worth. People may leave, you believe, simply because that's what people do. Unlike "People hurt me", the danger is less about harm and more about absence.

It can grow from early losses or separations: a parent who left, died, was often away or was emotionally unavailable, or care that came and went unpredictably. It can also follow later experiences of being left suddenly, betrayed or replaced. When loss has come without warning before, watching for it can feel like the only protection.

Try looking at one relationship as it is now. What does this person actually do that shows commitment or care? What would you need, from them or from yourself, to feel a little more secure? If they did leave one day, what support and what parts of your life would still be there?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 16

16. The people I love will leave me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What signs do I watch for that someone might be leaving, and what do I usually do when I notice them?

2. Which relationships in my life have lasted, or have changed without ending?

3. What would help me feel more secure in a relationship without needing a guarantee that it will last forever?

Optional deeper thread: If I let myself believe someone might stay, what would I be afraid of feeling?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 17

17. I don't matter

Possible root:

My feelings, needs and perspective carry little weight. What happens to me does not seem important enough to deserve attention or consideration.

Keeping quiet about what matters to you

Notice one moment you dismiss your own disappointment, leave a preference unspoken or assume there is no point asking to be considered. What made your experience seem less important?

The things you leave unspoken

Someone asks what you would prefer, and you say that anything is fine before checking whether it is. A decision affects you, but you do not expect to be consulted. Something hurts, and you tell yourself it is too small to mention.

You may be present, included and even loved, while feeling that your experience carries little weight. People know you are there. The question is whether what happens inside your life deserves their attention.

This can make your own feelings seem optional. Someone else's disappointment needs a response; yours needs to be managed quietly. Their preference helps shape the plan; yours feels like an unnecessary complication. You may become so practised at dismissing yourself that you do not immediately notice you have done it.

Sometimes the belief is felt most in conversation: "Nobody cares what I have to say," "Nobody listens to me unless I shout" or "Nobody respects me." You may stop offering your view, or find yourself pushing harder and louder to be heard, then feeling dismissed either way. It can help to notice where you are heard, and whether the people who don't listen are the ones whose attention you most need. The belief may also sound simply like "I'm invisible" or "I'm insignificant."

"I don't matter" is different from "My needs come last". That belief places other people ahead of you in the order of care. This one can question whether your experience belongs in the calculation at all.

Your experience deserves consideration

It also differs from being unwanted. You may feel welcome in a group and still assume that your opinion is not worth hearing. Someone may want your company while you struggle to believe they would care about what upset you.

Perhaps you have been repeatedly overlooked, interrupted or treated as though your feelings were inconvenient. Perhaps this conclusion has another history. Consider whether you allow your experience the same attention you give other people's, including on days when you have little to offer them.

The practice begins by giving your own experience a place. What did you want? What affected you? What would you like someone to understand? Naming those things does not require anyone else to agree with every preference or meet every need.

With someone who listens respectfully, you might express one small preference or explain the impact of a particular moment. Notice both their response and your own impulse to minimise what you have said. If your experience is repeatedly dismissed, that is information about the relationship, not a measure of your worth.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 17

17. I don’t matter

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What have I dismissed recently that I would take seriously if a friend described it?

2. Where do I assume my perspective will not count before I have expressed it?

3. What would giving my experience fair consideration look like in one ordinary situation?

Optional deeper thread: Do I believe I matter only when I am useful, or can my experience deserve care even when I am not contributing anything?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 18

18. I don't fit anywhere

Possible root:

There is no place where I can belong without substantial adaptation. Inclusion depends on presenting a version of myself that fits the room.

Changing yourself to fit in

Notice one interaction where you translate, conceal or alter yourself. Which adjustments feel freely chosen, and which feel necessary to remain acceptable?

The effort of fitting in

You can be included and still feel slightly outside the group. You understand how to participate, but part of your attention stays on how to do it correctly. A joke, an opinion or a personal detail gets adjusted before it reaches the conversation.

Everyone adapts somewhat across settings. You may speak differently at work than with a close friend and feel comfortable doing so. This belief becomes relevant when adaptation feels continuous and belonging never reaches the version of you doing the adapting.

This belief can also sound like "Nobody understands me" or "No one accepts me for who I really am." Being understood fully by one person is rare. Being understood in part, by several people, may be more available than it feels.

For some people the barrier feels like temperament: "I'm too quiet or shy to find real friends or a partner." Quieter people often connect in different ways, through one-to-one time, shared activities or slower friendships. Not fitting a loud room doesn't mean there is no room for you.

There may be real differences in culture, identity, disability, interests or communication style. You may have encountered exclusion or environments that were not designed with you in mind. The problem is not necessarily an inaccurate belief or a lack of effort. Better access, safer company or a different community may be needed.

Conditions that let you be yourself

This differs from "I'm unwanted". You may know people want you there and still feel that you cannot arrive fully as yourself. "I'm too much" focuses on reducing a part of your expression. "I don't fit anywhere" makes a broader prediction about whether any suitable place exists.

Belonging need not mean complete similarity or one group meeting every need. You may find different forms of recognition in different relationships. One person understands an interest, another shares an experience, another respects your quiet. Partial connection can be real without being the whole answer.

Start by identifying the conditions that make you feel less edited. They might include shared interests, clear communication, accessible surroundings or permission to disagree. You do not have to reveal more in a setting that has not earned trust. A small step could be looking for a better fit rather than becoming better at hiding.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 18

18. I don’t fit anywhere

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What am I adapting in one particular setting, and how much effort does it take?

2. Where have I felt even partly understood or less monitored?

3. What change of setting, access or company might support belonging without requiring more self-erasure?

Optional deeper thread: Have I taken not fitting in particular places as evidence that no suitable place can exist?

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 19

19. I'm behind everyone else

Possible root:

My life should meet a timetable. Reaching a milestone later than expected means I am falling short as a person.

Comparing your progress with everyone else's

Catch one comparison and name the milestone, the timetable and the person or expectation you are measuring against.

Whose timetable are you following?

Someone shares news and you calculate where you should be by now. A qualification, relationship, home or new beginning becomes a measure of your own timing. You may want the thing itself, or mainly want relief from feeling late.

Achievements can become difficult to enjoy because you think they should have happened years ago. Beginning something new may feel exposing: you will have to be a beginner at an age when you expected to be established. The comparison can create urgency and hesitation at the same time.

Timetables often leave out the conditions of a life. Health, money, caring responsibilities, opportunity, discrimination and chance affect what is possible. Comparing visible milestones without those conditions can make a judgement look objective when it is missing much of the information.

A pace that belongs to your life

Unlike "I'm not good enough", this belief specifically measures position against time or other people. Unlike "It's too late for me", it may still imagine the goal is possible, but insist that you should already have reached it. A late beginning then feels less valuable than an earlier one, even if it would matter to you now.

Some opportunities are time-sensitive, and some losses are real. Give those their due while asking whose timetable you are using to judge the rest of your life. If the deeper feeling is that life itself should have unfolded differently, It shouldn't be like this explores that wider response.

You might want to study, yet feel embarrassed about learning alongside younger people. It can help to separate the interest from the comparison: would the learning still matter if nobody knew when you began? If it would, the timing may affect your practical plan without deciding the value of doing it.

Choose one comparison and ask whether you actually want the milestone, the recognition it represents or the imagined feeling of having caught up. Your next step may differ depending on the answer. You can make a realistic plan from where you are without first agreeing that where you are is shameful.

SELF-WORTH, LOVE AND BELONGING · BELIEF 19

19. I'm behind everyone else

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Behind whom or what timetable do I feel, specifically?

2. What conditions of my life disappear from that comparison?

3. If this goal still matters to me, what would a worthwhile next step look like from here?

Optional deeper thread: Would reaching the milestone satisfy my own wish, or mainly quiet the fear of being judged?

SECTION 02

Needs, care and boundaries

I can have needs, too.

These entries explore carrying the load, allowing rest, the cost you believe success demands, receiving care, anger and making room for your needs. Consider what is yours to carry and what support is available.

IN THIS SECTION

20. I have to do it all

21. Success requires sacrificing everything else

22. I don't deserve rest

23. It's not safe for me to receive

24. It's not safe for me to be angry

25. My needs come last

26. My needs are a burden

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 20

20. I have to do it all

Possible root:

Whatever needs doing becomes my responsibility. If someone else cannot or will not carry it, I must.

When every task seems to become yours

Before accepting one task, notice how it became yours.

The work you carry, including the remembering

You remember the appointments, notice the empty cupboard and keep track of what needs to happen next. Even when someone else does a job, you may still be the person who noticed it, organised it and checked that it was finished.

Some of this work is easy to see. Much of it happens quietly in your head.

You might take on a task before considering whether you have room for it. When someone asks for a volunteer, you're already rearranging your day. If a job remains undone, it becomes harder to leave it alone, even when another capable person has agreed to do it.

The thought underneath may be simple: "It should be me."

You may trust other people's ability and still feel guilty letting them contribute. Having the capacity to do something can feel like an obligation to do it, regardless of what you're already carrying.

How the role becomes familiar

Perhaps you were relied on early. You became the sensible one, the helpful one or the person who could manage without much attention. Being useful may have brought appreciation, or there may simply have been work that nobody else was doing.

The pattern can also develop in adult life. You take over during a difficult period, then continue long after the original reason has passed. People become accustomed to what you provide. Responsibilities accumulate without anyone having a conversation about whether the arrangement still works.

There may be satisfaction in being dependable. You can value that part of yourself and also feel tired of being the person everyone assumes will manage.

Sometimes the load is genuinely unavoidable with the support currently available. A sole carer, an understaffed worker or someone facing financial pressure may have very few choices. Practical help, resources and fairer arrangements matter. A change in how you think cannot supply support that is missing. If the underlying worry is whether there will ever be enough time, money or support, There's never enough explores that feeling without dismissing real shortages.

Shared work needs shared ownership

Begin by naming what you carry. Include the organising, anticipating and following up, as well as the visible jobs. This can help you explain why you're stretched when other people see only the finished result.

Then consider one responsibility that could reasonably be shared or renegotiated. A useful conversation might establish who will own the task, what needs to happen and when, so that you aren't still responsible for every reminder.

Someone else may approach it differently. Where the outcome is adequate and safe, allowing their method can be part of letting the responsibility become theirs.

Essential care needs a reliable arrangement before you step back. For other tasks, there may be room to reconsider the deadline, the standard or whether the task needs doing at all.

You can remain a caring, dependable person while being honest about your capacity.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 20

20. I have to do it all

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Which responsibilities have become mine through habit rather than agreement?

2. When someone helps, what planning or checking do I continue to carry?

3. What could reasonably be shared, and what support is genuinely missing?

Optional deeper thread: If I stopped taking responsibility for everything, what would I believe that said about me? Would sharing the work feel reasonable, or would part of me see it as being selfish, lazy or letting people down?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 21

21. Success requires sacrificing everything else

Possible root:

I can have success or a life, but not both. If I want to achieve something, my rest, health, relationships and needs have to pay for it.

Feeling you must sacrifice everything to succeed

Notice one goal you care about. What do you believe it will cost you, and who taught you that it had to cost that much?

When the price seems fixed

You work late again and tell yourself it's temporary, just until this project, this launch or this qualification is done. Then the next one begins. Meals, sleep, friendships and time with people you love are pushed to later, and later keeps moving. Stopping feels like falling behind, and resting can feel like proof that you don't want it enough.

The belief can also work the other way. You might hold back from a goal because you believe it would swallow everything else. You might turn down the promotion, never start the business or stay small in your work. That's not because you don't want more. It's because the price seems so high. Not pursuing success can look like a lack of ambition when it's really this belief about the cost.

There are times when something important asks for more than usual: a deadline, a season, a training period, a new baby, a crisis. Choosing to give extra for a while can be a real and reasonable choice. The belief is different. It says the sacrifice is required, permanent and total, and that the cost is part of the proof that the success is earned.

The price you believe success demands

Unlike "I have to do it all", this belief isn't mainly about carrying every responsibility. It's about the price of achievement. Unlike "I don't deserve rest", rest isn't something you have to earn so much as something success is assumed to forbid. Unlike "I have to earn my place", the concern is less about belonging and more about what success must cost.

It can grow from watching someone you love give everything to their work, a family business or a cause. It can come from workplaces, industries or cultures where exhaustion is admired and limits look like weakness. Sometimes it follows a success that genuinely did cost a great deal, until that seemed like the only way it could happen.

Try naming what success would actually mean for you, in specific terms. Then list what you are currently giving up for it, and what you might be unwilling to lose. Is each sacrifice truly required, or has it simply been assumed? Is there any version of the goal that leaves room for some of what matters to you?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 21

21. Success requires sacrificing everything else

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What have I given up, or put off, in the belief that success requires it?

2. Where did I learn that achieving something meant sacrificing everything else?

3. What would success look like if it had to include rest, health and the people I care about?

Optional deeper thread: If success no longer cost so much, would I still trust that it was real or deserved?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 22

22. I don't deserve rest

Possible root:

Rest must be earned through sufficient work or suffering. How much I produce determines whether my needs are legitimate.

Feeling guilty for taking a break

Notice the condition you place before a break: after one more task, once everyone is settled, when you have done enough. Does that condition ever stay fulfilled?

Rest that has to be earned

You sit down and remember something. There is still a message to answer or a surface to clear. Even if you stay seated, part of you keeps presenting reasons you should be doing more. The pause is occupied by an argument about whether you are entitled to it.

Rest may feel acceptable when you are ill enough, exhausted enough or visibly unable to continue. Ordinary tiredness does not seem to qualify. You may explain a break afterwards, as though someone needs to approve the use of your time.

Unlike "I don't deserve good things", which can affect many kinds of pleasure or opportunity, this belief centres on the right to pause. This is distinct from having too little time or too much work. Those are practical difficulties that may require practical help. The belief appears when space is available but allowing yourself to use it still feels wrong. It also differs from fear that things will collapse: here, even if nothing would go wrong, you may feel undeserving.

Rest as an ordinary need

Perhaps productivity has been praised or stopping has been criticised. You might also have absorbed an idea that a good person is always useful. There does not have to be one remembered lesson. Notice the standard you apply now and whether it changes when you think about someone you care for.

Rest deserves a place in an ordinary day, even when it produces nothing you can point to afterwards. You may feel restless at first. Give yourself a little time to settle into the pause.

Where circumstances allow, choose a small, ordinary pause with no earning task attached. Notice the commentary without making it your instruction. If the real barrier is lack of support, name that too. You should not have to solve an impossible workload by becoming better at resting around it.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 22

22. I don’t deserve rest

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What would I have to do before I considered today’s rest deserved?

2. Would I require the same evidence from someone I love?

3. Is my obstacle permission, practical time, support or a mixture of these?

Optional deeper thread: Do I believe care becomes legitimate only once I can no longer keep going?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 23

23. It's not safe for me to receive

Possible root:

Accepting help or kindness creates debt, dependence or exposure. Receiving may give another person power over me.

When an offer feels like an obligation

When a modest offer arrives, notice what you expect will follow if you accept. Is there an actual condition, an uncertain one or a familiar prediction?

What accepting might cost

You may be comfortable giving and uneasy receiving. A compliment is deflected, a gift is matched quickly or an offer of help is answered before you have considered whether you need it. Saying yes can feel like entering an agreement whose terms you do not know.

The feared cost may be repayment, criticism, loss of control or being seen as needy. Sometimes you can receive from a service with clear boundaries more easily than from a friend, because the expectations are explicit. Sometimes even a no-strings offer feels difficult to believe.

This differs from "I have to earn my place", which concerns what you must contribute to belong. Here, the act of accepting may feel risky even when your place is secure. It also differs from "I can't rely on anyone": you may trust that someone will help, but worry about what receiving that help will cost.

An offer that leaves you free to choose

Some offers do have conditions. Kindness may have been used to create obligation in your past or may still be used that way now. You do not owe acceptance to every person who offers something. Declining an intrusive gift or clarifying a favour can be a healthy boundary.

The useful distinction is between an offer that compromises your choices and one that leaves them intact. Can you ask what is expected? Can you say no to a later request without punishment? Has this person respected your limits before?

With someone trustworthy, you might accept one small kindness after clarifying any uncertainty. Keep it small enough to feel comfortable. Notice whether you can choose how to respond before the familiar urge to refuse or repay takes over.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 23

23. It's not safe for me to receive

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I imagine I will owe if I accept this particular offer?

2. What do I know about the person's expectations, and what could I clarify?

3. Which kinds of support let me receive while keeping clear boundaries?

Optional deeper thread: Can someone see that I need something without gaining the right to decide for me?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 24

24. It's not safe for me to be angry

Possible root:

If I feel or show anger, I could hurt someone, lose their love or become a person I don't want to be.

When you talk yourself out of feeling angry

Think of one manageable irritation that you quickly explained away.

When anger feels unacceptable

You may have words for tired, hurt or disappointed, while "angry" feels harder to allow.

Someone crosses a limit, and you begin explaining their intentions. You remind yourself how much they're dealing with or tell yourself that other people have it worse. By the time you've considered everyone else's circumstances, your own objection has almost disappeared.

You might feel irritated and immediately apologise, even before you have said or done anything hurtful. Perhaps you can recognise unfairness when it happens to someone else, but struggle to feel entitled to object when it happens to you.

Sometimes the anger turns into criticism of yourself: "Why am I so difficult? Why can't I just let this go?"

You may be judging the feeling before you have had a chance to understand what has upset you.

What anger might mean to you

For some people, anger is closely associated with intimidation, punishment or cruelty. If you grew up around frightening behaviour, you may have promised yourself that you would never make another person feel that way.

Even a small irritation of your own can then feel uncomfortable. You notice a resemblance to something you feared, and work hard to push it away.

For others, the concern is losing connection. Perhaps disagreement was treated as disrespect, or someone withdrew affection when you objected. Keeping the peace became part of keeping the relationship.

Unlike "It's unsafe to lose control", which fears what might happen if feelings become overwhelming, this belief can treat anger itself as unacceptable. You may also have learned that a good, caring or grateful person should have little reason to be angry. Feeling it can seem like evidence that you're failing to be the person you want to be.

Your experience may be different. What matters is the meaning you give your own anger and what you expect would happen if you acknowledged it.

Listening to the feeling and choosing your response

You can acknowledge anger privately before deciding what to do with it. Feeling it leaves you with choices about your words, actions and timing.

Sometimes the belief is expressed as "I can't stand up for myself." You may hold back even a reasonable request or boundary because you fear the other person's reaction. Speaking up need not mean aggression; it can mean naming what matters while choosing how to respond.

You might need clarification, a different arrangement, a boundary or time to consider what happened. You might discover that an expectation was never discussed, or that you misunderstood part of the situation.

Anger can draw your attention to something important, but it cannot establish all the facts on its own. Give yourself room to understand the concern and check your interpretation.

If you have spoken or acted hurtfully, you can take responsibility for that behaviour and make a repair while still considering what upset you.

Where another person's response could put you at risk, safety and support come first. Acknowledging anger does not oblige you to confront them.

A gentle starting point is to describe a small incident in your own words: what happened, what bothered you and what you would have preferred. You can decide afterwards whether any action would be useful.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 24

24. It's not safe for me to be angry

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I fear anger says about the kind of person I am?

2. What do I expect another person would do if they knew I was angry?

3. What matters to me in this situation, and how could I respond with care for myself and others?

Optional deeper thread: If I let myself be angry with someone I love, would I feel that I was being cruel, ungrateful or putting the relationship at risk? What would help you acknowledge a disagreement while still recognising the care you have for them?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 25

25. My needs come last

Possible root:

Other people's needs have a stronger claim than mine. Considering myself risks being selfish, difficult or uncaring.

Leaving your own needs out of the plan

When arranging one ordinary part of the day, notice whose needs enter the plan first and whether yours enter it at all.

When everyone else comes first

Someone asks what you need, and your mind goes to what needs doing for everyone else. You know their appointments, preferences and worries. Your own answer takes longer. Perhaps it seems less urgent, less clear or easier to postpone.

This does not always feel like sacrifice. It may feel like the normal order of things. You can be warm and attentive while making choices that repeatedly place you at the end of the queue. By the time there is space for you, the time or energy has gone.

There are moments when another person's need reasonably takes priority. A child, an emergency or an agreed responsibility may require that. The belief appears when the order becomes automatic across situations, regardless of urgency, capacity or fairness.

A plan that includes you

"I don't matter" questions personal significance. "My needs come last" concerns priority: you may know you matter to people while believing their comfort should still come before your own. Unlike "I don't deserve rest", it can affect food, privacy, affection, health care, time and having a say.

Naming a need does not demand that it must always come first or that someone else must meet it. It gives you information to include. A fair decision cannot consider something you have already ruled out as unimportant.

Try adding your needs to one small plan before solving it. "I need to eat before we leave" or "I need some quiet this evening" may be enough. Notice any guilt without treating it as evidence of wrongdoing. If your circumstances leave little room, the next step may be asking for help or changing an arrangement, rather than trying harder to accommodate everyone.

When you've lost touch with what you want

You may have spent so long arranging life around other people that your own preferences have become difficult to hear. Even when there is finally a free evening or someone asks what you would enjoy, you may draw a blank. You know what would suit them; knowing what would suit you takes longer.

That uncertainty does not mean there is nothing there to discover. You do not need to find one complete answer to who you are. Start with a small choice: which meal appeals, whether you would like company or quiet, or what you feel curious about. Give yourself time to notice, and permission to change your mind.

You can use the small-preference exercise in "It's not safe for me to want things" without assuming that its belief describes you. The first step can simply be hearing your own answer before considering what is possible or what would suit someone else.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 25

25. My needs come last

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I need today before I consider how convenient it is for others?

2. Where is someone else's priority temporary and reasonable, and where has it become the permanent rule?

3. How could one ordinary plan include me fairly without excluding everyone else?

Optional deeper thread: Do I recognise the same need as legitimate in another person but selfish in myself?

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 26

26. My needs are a burden

Possible root:

What I need costs other people too much. To keep their care and stay welcome, I should ask for as little as possible.

Apologising for needing help

Notice one moment you apologise for needing something, make a request smaller or withdraw it before someone has answered. What did you imagine your need would cost them?

When needing care feels costly

You need help, but before you ask, you think about how busy the other person is. You would like someone to listen, but they have enough to deal with. An offer of support brings relief, followed quickly by concern about the trouble you are causing. You may find yourself saying, "Only if it's really no bother," even when the need matters.

The worry is not necessarily that people do not care. You may know they love you and want to help. What feels difficult is the effort involved in caring for you. Somewhere underneath sits the thought: "I wish being close to me asked less of you."

You might explain a request at length, apologise several times or promise to make it up to someone before they have agreed. You might wait until a need becomes urgent because asking earlier seemed unnecessary. Or you may become very good at appearing fine, leaving others unaware of how much you are managing alone.

Sometimes being easy to care for becomes something you take pride in. You are undemanding, grateful and quick to adapt. Those qualities may be sincere, but there can also be a quiet rule attached: you are allowed to receive care as long as it requires very little.

This differs from "My needs come last", which places other people ahead of you in the order of care. "My needs are a burden" questions the effect of having needs at all. Even when someone makes you their priority, you may feel uncomfortable about what that costs them.

It also differs from "I don't matter". You may believe your experience matters while worrying that attending to it makes someone else's life harder. And while "It's not safe for me to receive" may involve fears about obligation, control or disappointment, this belief centres on the strain you imagine your needs place on others.

A need can take effort without making you a burden

Perhaps requests were once met with sighs, irritation or reminders of everything someone already did for you. Perhaps you watched people you loved struggle and decided to spare them whatever you could. Illness, financial pressure or a period of needing more support may also have shaped this feeling.

There is an important distinction here: meeting a need can require effort without making the person who has it a burden. Care sometimes takes time, energy, money or adjustment. Acknowledging those realities allows people to discuss what is possible. It does not make your need shameful or mean you should manage everything alone.

Other people are allowed to have limits, and you are allowed to ask. Someone may care deeply and still be unable to help in a particular way. Their answer can tell you about their capacity, rather than your worth or whether you should have spoken. Support may need to be shared, arranged differently or sought elsewhere.

If someone repeatedly treats ordinary needs with contempt or uses their help to make you feel indebted, that deserves attention too. You do not have to interpret every painful response as a misunderstanding inside yourself.

Begin with one small, clear request to someone who has shown respect for your choices and their own limits. Say what would help, then give them room to answer. Notice whether you feel an urge to apologise, withdraw the request or immediately offer something in return.

NEEDS, CARE AND BOUNDARIES · BELIEF 26

26. My needs are a burden

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I need that I keep making smaller so it will be easier for someone else?

2. When I imagine asking, what do I expect the other person to feel or conclude about me? What have they actually shown me?

3. What would one clear request sound like if I allowed both my need and the other person's right to answer?

Optional deeper thread: Have I made asking for very little a condition of being welcome in someone's life?

SECTION 03

Choice and what feels possible

I can begin where I am.

These entries explore choice, capability, judgement, responsibility and the pressure to manage how people close to you are seen. Real constraints and losses deserve attention alongside the possibilities still open to you.

IN THIS SECTION

27. I'm powerless

28. I have no choice

29. I'm responsible for how other people feel

30. The people close to me reflect on me

31. If I try hard enough, I can stop bad things happening

32. I can't trust my own judgement

33. I'm not capable

34. It's too late for me

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 27

27. I'm powerless

Possible root:

What I do will not make a difference. Other people or circumstances determine what happens, and my efforts have little weight.

Feeling there's no point in trying

Notice one ordinary moment when you decide there is no point asking, speaking or trying. What outcome have you already predicted?

When your actions seem to have little effect

Something matters to you, but you find yourself watching it unfold rather than taking part. A decision is made that affects your day. An arrangement keeps causing difficulty. Someone asks what you would change, and you can think of several things, yet making a suggestion feels almost pointless. You expect the situation to continue much as it is.

You may know what you want. You may even know what you could say or do. The difficulty is believing that your contribution would carry any weight. "I could ask" is followed almost immediately by "but it wouldn't change anything."

Sometimes this shows up as giving up before you begin. You leave a request unspoken, stop looking for alternatives or accept someone else's account of what is possible. At other times, you make an enormous effort, explain yourself repeatedly or try every approach you can think of. When the response still does not change, the exhaustion can deepen your sense that nothing you do matters.

There can be anger here, as well as resignation. Watching something happen while feeling unable to affect it can be deeply frustrating. You might argue strongly in one situation and go quiet in another. Both can sit alongside the same expectation: the outcome will ultimately be decided elsewhere.

This differs from "I have no choice." With that belief, another option may seem possible but forbidden, disloyal or unavailable to you. With "I'm powerless," you may feel free to try and still expect your effort to make no difference. One questions your room to choose; the other questions whether your actions can have an effect.

Where your actions can make a difference

You may have had experiences in which your wishes genuinely carried very little weight. In childhood, adults may have made decisions without listening, dismissed objections or changed the rules regardless of what you did. Similar experiences can happen later in relationships, workplaces or systems where power is uneven. Repeatedly asking for something important and receiving no response can make trying again feel costly.

Some limitations may still be real. Money, health, discrimination, dependence on another person or a lack of practical support can restrict what is possible. Recognising a belief should leave room for those circumstances. You deserve to have the actual difficulty understood, rather than being told that a different attitude would solve it.

It may help to look at one situation closely enough to separate its different parts. You might have little influence over another person's decision, some influence over the arrangements around it, and more say over what you ask for next. Support from someone else may also change what is possible. Having a voice does not always mean having to make yourself heard alone.

If someone else's response has become the only evidence you'll accept that you have any influence, their refusal can make every other action seem pointless. Asking for support, obtaining information or choosing where to put your time may still affect your situation, even if that person continues to disagree.

For example, you may be unable to change a meeting's decision but able to ask for the agenda in advance or have your concern recorded. That may be a limited result. You can recognise its usefulness and still be dissatisfied with how the wider decision was made.

Begin with one ordinary situation where a small request or action is safe and practical. Consider what would count as a useful difference, rather than requiring yourself to change the whole outcome.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 27

27. I'm powerless

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. In one current situation, what do I expect would happen if I asked, spoke or tried?

2. Which parts are outside my influence, and which parts might respond to a request, an action or help from someone else?

3. What would count as a useful difference, even if I could not change the whole situation?

Optional deeper thread: Do I judge whether I have any influence by whether another person listens, understands or changes? When they don't, do I conclude that nothing I do makes a difference?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 28

28. I have no choice

Possible root:

What I am allowed to do has already been decided. Choosing differently risks consequences I feel unable to face, or means becoming someone I believe I should not be.

Feeling trapped by obligations

Notice one time you say "I have to." Is this a practical requirement, an agreement you have made, or an expectation you have never felt able to question?

The option you feel unable to choose

Someone asks something of you, and you begin working out how to manage it before considering whether you can agree. An arrangement no longer suits you, but changing it feels like a decision you are not entitled to make. You can see what you would prefer, yet that preference seems to carry less weight than what is expected.

Sometimes you say, "There's no choice," when you can picture an alternative quite clearly. What feels impossible is allowing yourself to take it. Saying no might disappoint someone. Asking for a different arrangement might seem selfish. Reconsidering a commitment might feel like proof that you cannot be relied on.

You may wait for someone else to release you. If they notice how tired you are, perhaps they will stop asking. If the situation becomes difficult enough, perhaps leaving will finally be justified. Until then, you keep going, looking for permission in circumstances rather than feeling able to make a decision yourself.

There can be resentment in this position. You agree, then feel angry about what the agreement costs you. Other people may believe you have chosen freely because they heard you say yes. Inside, you may feel that refusing was never a real possibility.

This differs from "I'm powerless." You might believe that another choice would change the situation while feeling that you are not allowed to make it. The question here is about permission and autonomy.

Understanding what makes a choice difficult

In childhood, you may have had little say in decisions that affected you. Disagreement may have brought punishment, withdrawal or accusations of being difficult. Perhaps being agreeable helped you stay connected, or you learned that adults' needs took priority over your own. Similar expectations can develop later, including in relationships and workplaces where questioning an arrangement carries a cost.

Over time, a rule can become so familiar that you stop hearing it as a rule. “I must not disappoint anyone.” “Once I have agreed, I cannot change my mind.” “If someone needs me, I have to be available.” Each can close down a decision before you have considered the circumstances.

Some limits are real. You may depend on an income, need housing, have legal obligations or care for someone who cannot manage without reliable support. An unsafe relationship can make ordinary choices dangerous. Telling yourself that you are free to do anything would overlook those realities.

A useful beginning is to name what makes an option difficult. Is it unavailable at present? Would it require money, information, support or a careful plan? Would it involve a consequence you reasonably decide not to accept? Or does the possibility exist, while the guilt attached to choosing it feels unbearable?

One small part of an arrangement may be open to discussion even when much of it cannot change. You might ask for time to decide, seek information or talk through an option with someone you trust. Essential responsibilities still need reliable arrangements, and difficult or unsafe circumstances may call for practical support.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 28

28. I have no choice

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When I say, "I have no choice," what exactly prevents me from choosing differently?

2. What do I fear another choice would say about me, or lead someone else to think of me?

3. Is there one part of this arrangement I could question, renegotiate or seek support with?

Optional deeper thread: Am I waiting for someone else to give me permission to make a decision that is mine to consider?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 29

29. I'm responsible for how other people feel

Possible root:

It is my job to keep other people emotionally okay. If someone is upset, disappointed or unhappy, I must find a way to put it right.

Changing what you say to manage someone else's mood

Notice one moment when someone's mood changes and you immediately adjust what you say or do. Before deciding how to respond, what have you assumed is yours to resolve?

Someone else's mood becomes your responsibility

Someone close to you goes quiet, and your attention moves towards them. You replay the conversation, look for something you might have done and consider how to make things better. They may not have said that anything is wrong. You can still find yourself working on a problem you have not yet identified.

You might explain yourself before being asked, soften an ordinary preference or apologise because the atmosphere feels uncomfortable. If reassurance does not change their mood, you try something else. Your own plans become harder to attend to while they remain unsettled.

Sometimes you know their feelings have little to do with you. They have had a difficult day, received disappointing news or become frustrated with someone else. You want to help, but their distress can begin to feel like an assignment you must complete. Listening seems insufficient if they are still upset afterwards.

The same expectation can make disagreement difficult. You may have a reasonable limit and feel clear about it until you see the other person's reaction. Their disappointment makes you question whether you were entitled to the limit at all. You give way, and the relief of seeing them settle can be mixed with resentment about what you have agreed to. If you can see another option but feel you are not allowed to take it, I have no choice explores that loss of permission.

There can be pleasure and pride in being the person who knows how to soothe, encourage or bring everyone together. Those are meaningful qualities. The strain comes when you feel unable to rest while anyone around you is unhappy, or when caring for someone seems to require producing a particular feeling in them.

Caring without having to settle everything

You may have learned early to notice small changes in someone's face, voice or behaviour. Perhaps a parent relied on you for reassurance, or keeping an adult happy helped make home more predictable. You might have been told that someone was upset because of you, including at times when you were expressing an ordinary need. Similar expectations can develop in adult relationships too.

Paying attention may have served an important purpose. In some circumstances, it still does. If another person uses anger, threats or withdrawal to control what you do, the difficulty includes their behaviour and the conditions you are living with. Support and safety matter; you do not have to test a boundary alone to prove that you can hold one.

In other relationships, it may help to separate several things that have become joined together: how you behave, the effect your behaviour has, and whether the other person feels better afterwards.

You are responsible for your actions. If you speak harshly, break an agreement or cause harm, acknowledging it and making a repair matters. An apology, a change in behaviour or putting something right may be yours to offer. The other person may still need time, and you cannot decide when they should feel differently.

With someone who respects your limits, you might ask, "Would you like me to listen, or help you think through what to do?" You can also say how much time you have. A conversation can offer real care even when the person is still sad or disappointed at its end.

Their disappointment can be real while your decision remains reasonable. Supporting someone may mean staying alongside sadness without the conversation ending in relief. You can consider what care you are able to offer while leaving room for their own response.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 29

29. I'm responsible for how other people feel

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. When someone is upset, what do I assume I have done wrong or must do next?

2. Is there something in my behaviour that needs a repair, or am I trying to remove a feeling I find difficult to be around?

3. What care can I reasonably offer without making their mood the measure of whether I have done enough?

Optional deeper thread: Do I feel allowed to be okay while someone I care about is unhappy, or must I wait until I have helped them feel better?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 30

30. The people close to me reflect on me

Possible root:

How the people close to me look, behave and turn out says something about me. If they fall short, I'll be judged for it.

Feeling judged by what someone close to you does

Notice one moment someone close to you did or said something and you felt embarrassed, tense or responsible. What did you imagine other people were concluding about you?

When other people's choices feel like your reputation

Your child melts down in the supermarket and you feel every pair of eyes on you. Your partner tells a story at dinner and you wince at a detail they included. A parent says something awkward in front of your friends, or a sibling makes a choice you'd never make, and somehow it feels as though you're the one being judged.

You might brief people before an event, correct them in public, apologise on their behalf or steer the conversation away from them. With children, you might sometimes find yourself more concerned about how their behaviour looks to others than what they need in that moment. Their grades, manners, appearance or choices can start to feel like a report card on you.

Sometimes it goes further: "I need to control my significant other," or a strong need to control what a child, partner or family member wears, says, does or who they see. Their choices can start to feel as though they determine how other people see you.

It can take the form of a mission: "I must make my partner a better person." Encouraging someone you love can be caring. It becomes something else when their improvement feels like your responsibility, or your credit.

It is natural to care how the people close to you treat others, and parents do have a real role in guiding their children. Some behaviour genuinely affects you, such as cruelty, dishonesty or choices that cause harm. You can address those honestly. The belief goes further when ordinary differences in personality, taste, development or style feel like threats to your worth, and when your sense of being acceptable depends on someone else's choices.

When another person seems to carry your reputation

Unlike "I'm responsible for how other people feel", the concern isn't mainly others' emotions. It is how their behaviour makes you look. Unlike "I have to be perfect", the standard is applied to someone else rather than only to yourself, though the same fear of judgement often drives both. Unlike "It's unsafe to lose control", the control is directed at another person rather than at your own feelings or surroundings.

It can grow in families where appearances mattered a great deal and everyone's behaviour was treated as a reflection on the family. You may have been told as a child that you were embarrassing your parents, or seen how harshly a family was judged in your community when someone stepped out of line. Insecurity about your own place can also make it feel safer to manage everyone around you.

When control of a partner or family member becomes a pattern, it can cause real harm to them and to the relationship, even when it comes from fear rather than intention. If you recognise that pattern, or are on the receiving end of it, talking to a counsellor or a family violence service can help.

Try separating what you actually object to from how you imagine it looks. Is this something that genuinely affects them, you or others, which you could raise directly? Or is it a difference you could let them own as theirs?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 30

30. The people close to me reflect on me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Whose behaviour, appearance or choices make me feel judged, and what do I imagine people think of me?

2. Which of my reactions are about how they treat people or what they need, and which are about how I appear?

3. What would it be like to let them be different from me, and to be judged as myself?

Optional deeper thread: Whose judgement am I really trying to manage when I try to manage the people close to me?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 31

31. If I try hard enough, I can stop bad things happening

Possible root:

Enough effort, preparation or vigilance can keep things safe. If something goes wrong, I should have noticed sooner or done more to prevent it.

Checking again because something might go wrong

Notice one extra check you make after a routine task has already been dealt with. What are you hoping that check will prevent, and how will you decide you have done enough?

The work of trying to prevent every problem

You have made the arrangements, checked the details and done what was asked. Still, your attention stays with what might go wrong. You run through the possibilities again, looking for something you have missed. Being finished can feel less reassuring than finding another useful thing to do.

Perhaps you anticipate everyone's needs before a family gathering, prepare for every question before a meeting or keep checking that someone has followed through on an agreed task. Preparation can be useful and satisfying. The difficulty comes when there seems to be no point at which you are allowed to trust what is in place.

You may tell yourself, "If I stop, it all falls apart." Even when another person is capable, stepping back can feel like leaving a preventable problem unattended. You might want someone to share the responsibility while finding it difficult to let them carry it in their own way.

When things go well, you may conclude that the vigilance was necessary. When something goes wrong, you may conclude that you needed more of it. Either outcome can leave you with the same instruction for next time: try harder, check more, stay available.

"I have to do it all" centres on obligation and what leaving a task to someone else would mean about you. "I need to know what's going to happen" centres on needing certainty. Here, your continued effort feels necessary to prevent harm or disappointment. By contrast, I'm powerless explores the feeling that your actions cannot change an outcome at all.

Finding a workable limit to responsibility

You may have lived through circumstances in which paying close attention genuinely helped. Perhaps adults were unpredictable, mistakes brought harsh consequences or important responsibilities fell to you before you had enough support. Later experiences of being let down, blamed or caught unprepared may also have made constant monitoring feel necessary.

A painful event can leave a particular kind of question behind: "What could I have done to stop it?" Looking back, you may notice a detail that seems significant now. It can be difficult to remember how much less you knew at the time, or how many outcomes were possible before you knew which one happened.

There may also be substantial responsibilities in your life today. Parenting, caregiving and work can require careful planning and dependable follow-through. Someone carrying those responsibilities without enough help needs practical support. Simply asking them to worry less would leave the actual workload untouched.

For one ordinary task, consider what reasonable care requires and how you will recognise that it has been provided. Which parts depend on you, and which involve other people or circumstances? A clear agreement about who is doing what may help more than continuing to monitor every detail yourself.

Keep essential medical, caregiving and safety checks intact. The purpose is to understand the monitoring that continues beyond a task's needs, while making sure genuine responsibilities have enough support.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 31

31. If I try hard enough, I can stop bad things happening

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What exactly am I trying to prevent through extra effort, preparation or checking?

2. What reasonable care does this situation require, and how will I recognise when I have provided it?

3. Which parts of the outcome depend on other people or circumstances beyond my influence?

Optional deeper thread: When something goes wrong, do I assume I should have prevented it simply because I can now imagine something else I might have done?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 32

32. I can't trust my own judgement

Possible root:

My perception is less reliable than other people's. I need outside confirmation before my view deserves weight.

Second-guessing yourself after asking for advice

Notice when advice replaces your view before you have examined it. What did you think initially, and what evidence changed your mind?

Whose view carries the most weight?

You make a decision, ask someone about it and find the decision open again. Another opinion can seem more authoritative simply because it comes from outside you. You may collect several views and become less clear rather than better informed.

Sometimes the uncertainty concerns events: "Did that really happen the way I understood it?" Sometimes it concerns permission: "Am I allowed to find this upsetting?" You can acknowledge that perceptions are fallible while also recognising that your experience deserves consideration.

A past mistake may have become evidence that you cannot judge well. Or your perspective may have been repeatedly dismissed. There may be other reasons too. Notice whether you give your own judgement time to develop before another opinion replaces it.

Your judgement can include advice

This differs from "I need to know what's going to happen". That belief seeks certainty about the outcome. Here, you may have adequate information but mistrust yourself as the person using it. More advice cannot necessarily resolve that concern if every new voice outranks your own.

Good judgement can include evidence, uncertainty, expertise and revision. Consulting a professional about a medical, legal or financial issue is not abandoning yourself. Nor does disagreeing with someone require rejecting everything they know. Your preferences and observations can sit alongside relevant expertise.

Choose a low-stakes decision. Write what you think, what matters to you and what information is missing. Then seek advice if useful and compare the reasoning, rather than treating confidence or status as the whole argument. A decision that later needs adjustment does not establish that you should never trust yourself.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 32

32. I can’t trust my own judgement

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What is my own view of one current decision before I consult anyone else?

2. Which outside information is relevant evidence, and which is simply another preference?

3. What would make this decision adequately informed without requiring certainty or universal agreement?

Optional deeper thread: Do I allow other people to be mistaken while treating one error of mine as permanent disqualification?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 33

33. I'm not capable

Possible root:

I lack what it takes. Whatever is asked of me, I won't be able to do it properly, and more effort or learning won't change that.

Feeling incapable or not qualified enough

Notice one thing you've decided you couldn't do. Is there a specific skill or piece of knowledge missing, or is it a verdict that would stay whatever you learned?

The many ways it can sound

Sometimes it's "I couldn't do that," said before you've tried. Sometimes it's "I'm so incompetent," after a mistake. It can be "I don't know enough yet," or "I'm not qualified," when your experience is directly relevant. The words differ, but the belief underneath is similar: the ability isn't there, and it won't be.

Some people describe it as a missing talent: "I'm just not a natural at sales, marketing or leadership." Skills like these are mostly learned, but the word "natural" suggests that if something doesn't come easily, it was never yours to have. "I'm too young to be taken seriously" or "I don't have enough experience" can belong here too, when the doubt is really about what you can offer.

The verdict can also sound like "I'm unintelligent", "I'll never be as clever as everyone else", "I'm weak", "I can't handle it" or "I can't stand it." Those statements deserve to be considered alongside what you have actually learned, managed and survived.

It might simply be "I'm incapable," or it might sound like "I have no good ideas" or "I have stupid thoughts," which can stop you from offering a view before anyone has heard it.

You might respond by avoiding. You turn down the role, let someone else take the lead or never quite start, because trying would risk proving the belief right. Or you might respond by preparing endlessly. There's always one more course or certificate, and when you finish it, the finish line moves. Both can protect you from being judged on what you offer now.

At work you might over-check, over-explain or begin with "I'm not an expert, but..." before saying something you know well. A mistake can feel like exposure, as if people are finally seeing what you've been hiding. Praise may sound like they simply haven't noticed yet.

A missing skill is not a fixed identity

Unlike "I'm a failure", which looks back at outcomes, this belief often looks ahead and rules things out before they happen. Unlike "I'm not good enough", it usually centres on ability rather than worth, although one can quietly stand in for the other. Unlike "I can't trust my own judgement", the doubt is less about decisions and more about whether you can do the thing at all.

Some things do require particular skills or qualifications, and some gaps are real. The belief becomes limiting when the gap is general rather than specific. "I need to understand the tax rules before I set my prices" can be met. "I'm not capable" can't, because it never says what would be enough.

It can grow where you were compared with a more confident sibling, corrected more than encouraged, or not trusted to do things for yourself. It can also grow where qualifications were treated as the only proof of intelligence, or where you were the first in your family to enter a field. Lived experience, practical skill and knowledge that came without a certificate are easy to overlook, especially in yourself.

Take one thing you've ruled yourself out of. Write down what it actually requires. Mark what you already have, what you could learn or ask for, and what is genuinely out of reach. Then notice how much of "I'm not capable" is left.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 33

33. I’m not capable

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What have I recently ruled myself out of, and what exactly did I believe I couldn’t do?

2. What have I managed, learned or handled that this belief leaves out?

3. If I were capable of a first step, even an imperfect one, what would it be?

Optional deeper thread: What would I risk being seen as if I stopped holding back, or stopped preparing, and offered what I can do now?

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 34

34. It's too late for me

Possible root:

My chance has passed. What I want belongs to an earlier life, and beginning now would expose me to pointless disappointment.

Ruling out a new beginning before you explore it

Notice one possibility you dismiss with "too late". Is there a specific limit to investigate, a loss to grieve or a general prediction about your future?

When possibility feels closed

A possibility appears and is closed almost immediately. You have tried before, the pattern is old or the years have moved on. You may encourage someone else to begin while quietly placing yourself in a different category.

Often the words are simply "I'm too old." Too old to study, to change careers, to start dancing, to meet someone, to learn an instrument, to be a beginner in a room full of younger people.

"I'm too old" can sound like a plain fact, but age is often standing in for something else. It may be the fear of looking foolish while you learn, of being the oldest person there, of being judged, overlooked or simply not taken seriously. Messages about age and worth surround most of us, and they can be easy to absorb without noticing. It is worth asking whether your age is the real limit, or whether it is how you imagine other people will see you. The belief can appear at almost any age. Someone of 30 can feel too old as easily as someone of 70.

"I'm behind everyone else" says you should already have arrived. "I'm too old" says your age now disqualifies you from setting out at all.

Sometimes "too late" describes a real limit. A particular opportunity may have ended, a relationship may not be recoverable or a former capacity may have changed. Hope does not require pretending that every original plan can still happen. Grief and adaptation deserve space alongside new possibilities.

The belief becomes broader when one closed door is treated as evidence that nothing meaningful remains available. The desired outcome and every alternative are ruled out together. You may not yet have asked what is possible under today's conditions.

What remains possible now

This differs from "I'm behind everyone else". That belief says you are late to a timetable. This one says beginning itself has lost its value. It can also involve understandable fatigue after repeated disappointment. Reluctance is not proof that you do not want change enough.

You can begin by gathering one piece of information, even while the future feels uncertain. A conversation, an enquiry or a small supported attempt can help distinguish a real limit from an assumption. You may also discover that a different goal matters more to you now.

An enquiry can be quite small: asking whether a course has an entry route for someone with your experience, or whether an activity can accommodate your present capacity. The answer may reveal a real limit or an option you had not considered. Gathering that information does not commit you to going ahead.

Ask what the original hope represented: companionship, expression, security, learning, contribution or something different. If the original form is unavailable, is any part of that value still reachable? There may be no immediate answer. You can take time and seek support without signing a final verdict on what your life can contain.

CHOICE AND WHAT FEELS POSSIBLE · BELIEF 34

34. It's too late for me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What exactly do I believe it is too late for, and what supports that conclusion?

2. What value or experience did that hope represent to me?

3. What modest enquiry or supported step could help me learn what is still possible, without requiring a promise of success?

Optional deeper thread: Am I protecting myself from another disappointment by treating uncertainty as a final answer?

SECTION 04

Safety, trust and uncertainty

I can notice what is safe now.

These entries explore safety with other people and in the wider world, your body, money, resources and feelings. Consider what protection the present situation requires and what support would help.

IN THIS SECTION

35. The world is a dangerous place

36. It's unsafe to lose control

37. I'm safer on my own

38. I can't rely on anyone

39. It's not safe for me to want things

40. My body lets me down

41. There's never enough

42. Money isn't for people like me

43. I need to know what's going to happen

44. People hurt me

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 35

35. The world is a dangerous place

Possible root:

Harm could come at any moment. If I stop watching for danger, I or the people I love won't be safe.

Always on guard, expecting something bad

Notice one moment you scan for danger in an ordinary situation. What were you watching for, and what did the situation actually show?

When safety never quite arrives

You check the locks more than once, read the news and feel your chest tighten, or imagine the accident before anyone has left the house. A late reply from someone you love can bring up the worst possibilities. Even on a calm day, part of you stays alert, as if relaxing would leave a gap for something to go wrong.

The feeling may be expressed as "Risk and danger are everywhere" or "I'm never safe." These are sweeping conclusions, even when the original danger was very real.

You might avoid travel, crowds, new places or unfamiliar people. You might keep the people you care about close, worry when they take risks you'd never take, or find it hard to let children go off on their own. Other people may call you anxious or overprotective, while to you it feels like simply being sensible.

The world does contain real danger, and for some people it has been far more dangerous than for others. Violence, accidents, illness, disasters and loss happen. Caution in response to real risk is reasonable. The belief becomes limiting when the alarm is set to the same level for everything, so that ordinary days carry the weight of an emergency.

A broad alarm and a specific risk

Unlike "People hurt me", the danger isn't mainly about closeness or particular relationships. It can come from anywhere. Unlike "I need to know what's going to happen", the concern isn't uncertainty itself but what the uncertainty might hold. Unlike "It's unsafe to lose control", the threat sits mostly outside you rather than in your own feelings, although the two can feed each other.

It can grow from frightening experiences, especially early ones: violence at home or nearby, a sudden loss, an accident, a serious illness or a caregiver who was always anxious and warned of danger. It can also grow from living through events where danger was real and lasting, such as war, displacement, discrimination or disaster. A nervous system that learned to stay alert was doing its job. It may not yet have registered that some circumstances have changed.

Try separating the specific from the general. What is the actual risk in this situation, and how likely is it? What precaution, if any, is reasonable? Once that is in place, notice what the rest of the vigilance is trying to do for you, and whether it is adding safety or only adding strain.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 35

35. The world is a dangerous place

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Where does my alertness go up most, and what am I expecting to happen?

2. Which dangers in my life now are real and specific, and which are carried over from a different time or place?

3. What precautions actually help me feel safer, and what would I do with the attention the rest of my vigilance uses?

Optional deeper thread: What do I fear would happen if I let myself feel safe, even for a moment?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 36

36. It's unsafe to lose control

Possible root:

If I let my feelings show or loosen my grip on myself, something will happen that I can't manage.

When holding back your feelings seems safest

When you say, "I need to stay in control," what are you trying to prevent?

Keeping yourself tightly contained

You may be able to talk about a painful experience quite clearly while working hard to keep any feeling out of your voice. You know what happened. You can explain why it mattered. But when tears begin to rise, your attention shifts to holding them back.

Unlike "It's not safe for me to be angry", the fear here can extend to many feelings, rather than anger alone. Perhaps you worry that if you start crying, you won't stop. If you acknowledge anger, you might say something you regret. If you admit how much something hurts, you might struggle to get through the rest of your day.

Other people may see someone calm and capable. They may have little idea how closely you monitor yourself to stay that way.

This belief can also appear when someone offers you kindness. Being understood may bring feelings closer to the surface, and you find yourself changing the subject, making a joke or reassuring them that you're fine. Part of you wants the support, while another part is busy keeping everything contained.

What staying composed has meant

For some people, strong feelings were unwelcome in childhood. Crying brought criticism, anger brought punishment, or distress was met with someone else becoming distressed. Staying composed became a way to get through those situations.

Needing to control everything around you

For some people, keeping feelings manageable means controlling what is around them rather than what is inside. The belief might sound like "I need to control my environment to manage my feelings." The house has to be in order before you can settle. Plans need to go the way you arranged them. You might take charge of the holiday, the event or the conversation, because if things are done your way, nothing unexpected can stir you up.

Order, routine and planning can genuinely help, and it is reasonable to shape your surroundings to suit you. The difficulty comes when your feelings depend on everything staying just so, and other people's choices or ordinary disruptions feel like threats. Then a change of plan can feel like losing your footing, and the people around you may feel managed rather than included.

When you notice an urge to rearrange, correct or take over, try asking what feeling you are hoping to keep away. Is there another way of meeting that feeling, even briefly, that doesn't depend on everything around you being in place?

You may have lived with someone whose behaviour felt unpredictable or frightening. If their anger or distress led to harm, it can be difficult to imagine your own strong feelings having a different outcome.

Others recognise this belief after an experience of feeling overwhelmed, or after years in a role where there was little room to fall apart. You learned to keep going because people depended on you, and holding yourself together became familiar.

You may have different reasons, or no clear explanation. What matters here is what you expect would happen if you allowed yourself a little more room to feel.

A little room to choose

Having a feeling and deciding how to act on it are separate parts of an experience. You might feel angry and choose to leave a conversation before responding. You might feel tearful and ask for a moment. You might tell someone that a subject is difficult without explaining the whole story.

There is room between keeping everything tightly contained and sharing more than feels comfortable.

A small starting point could be acknowledging a feeling privately, asking for a pause, or saying, "I'd like you to listen, but I'm not ready to talk about all of it."

If feelings regularly become overwhelming, or you're concerned about how you might act, supported care can help you explore this at a manageable pace.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 36

36. It's unsafe to lose control

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. Which feeling do I work hardest to keep under control?

2. What do I imagine would happen if someone noticed it?

3. What would help me feel more able to choose how much I share?

Optional deeper thread: When I say I'm afraid of losing control, what does that mean to me: having a strong feeling, letting someone see it, or doing something I might regret?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 37

37. I'm safer on my own

Possible root:

Being close to people requires vigilance or self-management. Distance is the most reliable way to protect my space and choices.

Feeling able to relax only when you're alone

Notice what you stop doing when you are finally alone. Are you enjoying quiet, recovering from stimulation, no longer monitoring someone's reactions or something else?

The relief of being alone

A door closes and you feel a little more able to be yourself. There is no mood to read, no reaction to anticipate and no need to explain what you want to do next. You may like people and still experience their absence as a release from work you barely noticed you were doing.

Solitude can be restorative and freely chosen. Introversion, sensory needs and a preference for privacy are not problems this workbook needs to solve. This belief becomes relevant when being alone feels like your only route to safety, even though you also want connection.

You may keep visits short, avoid shared plans or become unavailable after a moment of closeness. You may be comfortable with company only while remaining useful or carefully composed. The difficulty may be less about liking someone and more about whether you can have a boundary in their presence.

Connection with room for you

This differs from "I can't rely on anyone". There, the worry is whether someone will come through. Here, their presence itself can feel demanding or exposing, even if they are reliable. "People hurt me" anticipates harm; this belief may also involve intrusion, overstimulation or the feeling that you cannot stop monitoring yourself.

Some people and environments genuinely do not respect your space. The task is not to persuade yourself to tolerate them. Consider whether there are people who accept a quiet moment, a change of mind or a clear limit without making you manage their response.

If you want more connection, begin with the conditions that make it workable: a shorter visit, a quieter setting, separate time afterwards or permission not to perform. There may be room for both the solitude you enjoy and the connection you want.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 37

37. I'm safer on my own

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What exactly becomes easier when I am alone?

2. Which part of company is difficult: noise, demands, scrutiny, unpredictability or something else?

3. What boundary or arrangement would make one wanted interaction more comfortable?

Optional deeper thread: Do I believe closeness requires giving up the right to have my own space?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 38

38. I can't rely on anyone

Possible root:

Depending on people leads to disappointment or vulnerability. I must be prepared to handle things without them.

Expecting disappointment before asking for help

Notice one moment you decide not to ask for help before finding out whether anyone is available. What outcome are you predicting?

When relying on someone feels risky

You plan as though help will not arrive. A friend offers and you make the request smaller, explain why it is not important or give them several ways to withdraw. You may feel relieved when you can say you have sorted it yourself, even if doing so has cost you more than you could comfortably spare.

The feeling can be summed up as "I'm alone" or "Everyone will eventually let me down." Even when support is available now, expecting disappointment can make it difficult to ask for or notice help.

There may be good reasons for caution. People may have failed to follow through, minimised what you needed or been unable to help at important times. Trust does not grow simply because someone tells you to be more open.

The question is whether "This person was unreliable in that situation" has become "No one can be relied upon for anything". Reliability is often specific. Someone may be a good listener but unreliable with time. Another may be dependable with practical tasks but unable to offer emotional care. Trust can be based on what a person has actually shown.

Trust can be specific

Unlike "It's not safe for me to receive", the central fear is not necessarily a debt created by help. It is that the help will fail or leave you exposed when you need it. Unlike "I'm safer on my own", you may enjoy closeness and still refuse to depend on anyone within it.

Doing everything yourself can hide the need from people who might respond. That does not make their support your responsibility to create. It means a clear, bounded request may provide more information than waiting to see whether someone notices.

"Could you collect me at three on Tuesday?" gives someone a clearer choice than "I need more support." If they cannot, you can consider another arrangement. If they agree, you have a specific commitment to observe, rather than having to decide all at once whether it is safe to depend on them.

If you choose to try, ask someone with relevant evidence of reliability for one modest thing. Agree what is needed and when. Keep appropriate backup for important responsibilities. One response is information about that person and request, not a final answer about all relationships.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 38

38. I can’t rely on anyone

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What have I needed recently that I did not ask for?

2. Who has shown reliability in the particular kind of help I need?

3. What would make a request clear, bounded and reasonable for both of us?

Optional deeper thread: Have I made complete self-reliance a requirement for never being disappointed again?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 39

39. It's not safe for me to want things

Possible root:

Acknowledging what I want exposes me to refusal, disappointment or shame. It is safer to keep desire small or unspoken.

Dismissing what you want before you consider it

Notice when a preference appears and is immediately replaced by what is sensible, affordable, acceptable or convenient. Can you name the preference before deciding what to do about it?

The wish you dismiss before you hear it

Someone asks what you would like and you answer with what would suit them. You see something that interests you, then quickly explain why it is impractical. The wish may disappear from the conversation before you have allowed yourself to hear it fully.

Practical judgement has a place. Resources, commitments and other people's choices affect what is possible. This belief acts earlier: wanting itself feels risky, before you have considered any action. Naming a hope can feel like making a demand or preparing yourself to be hurt.

You may remember requests being mocked, refused harshly or used against you. Or you may simply recognise a habit of lowering expectations. Does your own preference get a hearing now?

Giving your preferences a voice

This differs from "My needs come last", which prioritises others. Here, wanting may feel dangerous even when nobody else is inconvenienced. It also differs from "It's too late for me": you may believe an opportunity exists but feel reluctant to admit it matters.

Wanting is not a contract. You can want something and decide not to pursue it. You can express a preference and accept another person's boundary. You can feel disappointed without concluding that it was foolish to care. Keeping those distinctions can make room for an honest answer.

Start with a small preference, perhaps a meal, an activity or how to spend a free hour. Write it privately, then consider whether you want to act on it. Simply knowing your preference may be enough for today.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 39

39. It's not safe for me to want things

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I want before I edit the answer into something more acceptable?

2. What do I fear would happen if I admitted that preference, even privately?

3. Can I separate knowing what I want from deciding whether, when or how to pursue it?

Optional deeper thread: Have I treated disappointment as proof that wanting was a mistake?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 40

40. My body lets me down

Possible root:

My body is an obstacle I must control or override. Its limits or symptoms mean it is failing me.

Feeling betrayed when your body changes your plans

Notice the words you use when a symptom or limit changes your plans. What practical difficulty is present, and what judgement are you adding about your body or yourself?

When your body feels difficult to rely on

You want to do something and your body makes it difficult. Pain, fatigue, illness or a change in capacity may alter an ordinary day or a plan that matters deeply. Frustration, sadness and anger can be understandable responses to real loss. You do not have to feel grateful for symptoms or pretend the limitations are welcome.

The belief becomes relevant when the body is treated as an opponent. A need for rest feels like weakness. Using an aid feels like surrender. A symptom becomes another reason to criticise yourself for not keeping up.

This entry concerns the relationship you have with your body, not the cause of a condition. It does not suggest that symptoms are created by beliefs or that changing your attitude will resolve illness. New or concerning symptoms need appropriate medical attention, and existing care plans remain important.

Care for the capacity you have today

Unlike "I don't deserve rest", the issue may not be permission to stop. It may be grief about having to stop at all. Unlike "I can't trust my own judgement", the mistrust is directed at bodily capacity or sensations rather than decisions. Those distinctions can help you name what actually needs care.

You can seek treatment, want improvement and also respond to your current needs. Acceptance of a limit today does not mean agreement that it is fair or a promise never to pursue change. It can mean making a plan that does not require you to punish yourself for having the limit.

Consider one accommodation that would make today more manageable: a different pace, an aid, assistance or a conversation with your clinician. A practical act of care can coexist with frustration about what your body is going through.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 40

40. My body lets me down

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What has become difficult, and what feelings do I have about that loss or change?

2. What do I tell myself about needing care, assistance or an adjustment?

3. What practical support would help me work with today's capacity alongside appropriate health care?

Optional deeper thread: Am I asking my body to prove my worth by functioning as though it has no limits?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 41

41. There's never enough

Possible root:

What I need may disappear or remain out of reach. I must keep securing more before I can feel able to pause.

Worrying there won't be enough

Notice what "not enough" refers to in one moment. Is there a present shortfall, a future possibility or a target that has changed again?

The target that keeps moving

Enough may mean money, time, security, affection or reassurance. You reach something you thought would help, then discover another condition to meet. A little more saving, a little more certainty, one more sign that someone cares. The sense of having arrived remains difficult to locate.

There can also be a genuine shortage. Financial hardship, housing insecurity and insufficient support are not errors of thinking. You do not need to tell yourself that there is enough when there is not. Practical assistance and a realistic plan may be the first need.

This belief is useful to explore when the alarm continues without closely tracking present conditions. The situation improves but the expectation of loss remains. Or no amount can be named that would let you feel secure, because the requirement is a guarantee that nothing will ever change.

What would be enough for now?

Unlike "I'm not good enough", the shortage is located in resources or what is available to you. Unlike "I need to know what's going to happen", the emphasis is on having enough protection or provision, rather than knowing the exact outcome. These concerns can overlap without being identical.

There may be past experience of instability, or a family habit of preparing for loss. Try naming what you lack, what you have and what remains uncertain. Each may call for a different response.

For example, a free afternoon may arrive and immediately feel too short to be worth using. What did you hope the time would provide: rest, company or progress on one task? Naming that purpose may help you use what is available. If the time is genuinely inadequate, it also makes the shortfall clearer.

For one practical area, define what sufficient would look like for a limited period. For relational needs, name the kind of contact or reassurance you want rather than treating affection as a quantity to accumulate. A workable next step can coexist with uncertainty about the future.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 41

41. There's never enough

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What is not enough right now, specifically?

2. Which parts are a current shortage, a prediction or a moving standard?

3. What resource, plan or conversation would address the actual need rather than promise complete certainty?

Optional deeper thread: Would reaching my target let me feel more secure, or would security still require a guarantee against any future loss?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 42

42. Money isn't for people like me

Possible root:

Money is hard to come by, and having more of it would cost me something important. Struggling with money is safer, or more honest, than having plenty.

Undercharging, avoiding money or feeling guilty about it

Notice one moment you held back from asking for, earning or keeping money. What did you expect it would cost you, or say about you, if you did?

When money feels like it belongs to someone else

You might say "Money is hard to make" and feel it as plain fact. Every dollar seems to take enormous effort, and anything that comes easily feels suspicious or undeserved. You might undercharge for your work, avoid asking for a pay rise, give discounts before anyone asks or feel uncomfortable when you're paid well.

It can also sound like "I'm not good with money," said as if it were a fixed trait rather than a set of skills nobody taught you. Or it can sound like "Being poor just runs in my family." That can describe something real about where you started. It can also become a prediction that nothing you do will change it.

There can also be a moral side: "Rich people are greedy." If having money means being selfish, careless or dishonest, then earning more can feel like becoming someone you don't want to be. You might give money away as soon as it arrives, avoid looking at your finances or feel guilty when you have more than the people around you. Struggling can feel more loyal to your family, your community or your values.

Money is genuinely hard to come by for many people, and access to it is shaped by wages, housing costs, inequality, discrimination, health and where you start. People hold a wide range of views about wealth and fairness, and this entry doesn't ask you to change yours. It invites you to notice whether a belief about money is limiting what you allow yourself, in ways you wouldn't choose.

Money, values and belonging

Unlike "There's never enough", the concern isn't mainly running out. It's whether money is something you're allowed, or able, to have. Unlike "I don't deserve good things", it attaches specifically to money and what money is believed to say about a person. Unlike "Success requires sacrificing everything else", the cost is less about time and rest and more about identity and values.

These beliefs are often learned at home. You may have watched adults work very hard for very little, heard money talked about with fear, anger or shame, or been told that wanting more was selfish. Money may have been a source of conflict, secrecy or loss. In some families, doing better than others can feel like a betrayal. The views you formed made sense of what you saw.

Try separating your values from your expectations. What do you believe about how money should be earned and used? Then ask whether having more of it would actually require you to give those values up, or whether you could earn, keep and use money in a way that fits them.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 42

42. Money isn't for people like me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What did I learn about money growing up, from what people said and from what they did?

2. When have I turned down, avoided or given away money, and what was I feeling at the time?

3. If money were neither good nor bad in itself, what would I want my relationship with it to look like?

Optional deeper thread: Who would I worry about becoming, or leaving behind, if I had more money than I do now?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 43

43. I need to know what's going to happen

Possible root:

Until I know how this will turn out, I can't feel settled or let myself move forward.

When you keep looking for a certain answer

Notice one occasion when you seek more information about a small, reversible decision.

When certainty feels necessary

A decision stays open because one detail remains uncertain. You research, rehearse conversations or ask how every stage will work before agreeing to begin. A disappointing answer can feel easier than an unfinished one because at least there is something definite to organise around.

You might reread a message, trying to work out what someone meant. Perhaps you want to know where a relationship is going before allowing yourself to enjoy it, or need a clear picture of a new situation before deciding whether to take part.

Sometimes the question follows you into the rest of your day. You're doing something else, but part of your attention remains occupied by what hasn't been settled.

Preparation can help you make a sound decision. The difficulty comes when you're asking it to answer something that can only become clear with time or experience. Each answer may bring relief until another uncertainty appears.

What knowing would give you

It may help to ask what a definite answer would allow you to do.

Would you finally relax? Let yourself look forward to something? Stop preparing for disappointment? Feel confident that nobody could blame you for choosing badly?

For some people, uncertainty means being unprepared. For others, it means feeling exposed to disappointment or having to make a decision they may later regret. The need to know can look similar while serving quite different purposes.

You may trust your ability to make decisions when the information is available. What feels difficult is accepting that a reasonable decision can still have an outcome you didn't expect.

How this may have become familiar

Perhaps plans changed without warning when you were younger, or adults gave you little explanation about events that affected you. You may have learned to look for clues so you could prepare yourself.

Later experiences can matter too. An unexpected loss, a broken promise or a period of instability may leave you wanting more reassurance before you commit to anything again.

You may simply recognise that knowing what to expect has always helped you feel comfortable. A preference for predictability becomes difficult when an unanswered question holds up choices you would otherwise like to make.

A decision with some questions still open

Some decisions genuinely require more information, time or advice. Your circumstances matter when deciding how much preparation is enough.

For a modest decision, try naming the information you reasonably need before proceeding. Then consider which parts will remain unknown however carefully you prepare.

You might ask, "If this turns out differently, what options would I have?" A fallback plan, someone to consult or permission to reconsider may make a next step feel more manageable.

You can also choose a smaller commitment. Trying something once, asking an initial question or agreeing to review an arrangement can give you experience before you decide what comes next.

The aim is to make room for choices while some questions remain open.

If you have enough information but doubt your own judgement, explore "I can't trust my own judgement".

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 43

43. I need to know what's going to happen

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What am I waiting to know before I allow myself to begin or settle?

2. What would a definite answer give me permission to feel or do?

3. What information would change my decision, and what could only become clear through experience?

Optional deeper thread: If I made a careful choice and it still turned out badly, would I believe I should have known? Would an unwelcome outcome feel like something to respond to, or proof that you were wrong to proceed without certainty?

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 44

44. People hurt me

Possible root:

Closeness eventually leads to harm. Expecting it and keeping distance are how I protect myself.

Expecting to be hurt, even when someone is kind

In a relationship that has shown respect, notice what you expect when the person is kind or when a small disagreement occurs. What current evidence supports that expectation?

Expecting the familiar hurt

You may have good reasons to be cautious. Someone hurt you, perhaps repeatedly or while holding a position of trust. A simple instruction to trust again can miss both the reality of that experience and your right to choose who has access to you.

For some people the expectation includes judgement: "Others are waiting to judge or hurt me." A guarded response may have developed for understandable reasons, but not every new interaction will repeat the same experience.

The belief becomes broader when a particular person's behaviour becomes a prediction about people generally. Warmth can look like the beginning of a catch. A disagreement can seem to announce the familiar turn. You may find it difficult to distinguish disappointment, incompatibility, ordinary imperfection and deliberate harm because each feels like the start of the same outcome.

This differs from "I can't rely on anyone", where the concern is not being supported. Here, the expectation is being harmed through closeness. It also differs from "I'm unlovable": you might believe you are worthy of care while doubting that others can offer it safely.

Choosing the pace of trust

Some people remain unsafe. You do not need to test the belief by returning to a harmful relationship, disclosing painful information or giving someone another chance. Boundaries, distance and outside support can be appropriate responses to present evidence.

Where you want connection, trust can be gradual and specific. Does someone respect a no? Do their actions match their words? Can they take responsibility for a mistake without making you carry it? Those observations may be more useful than deciding whether all people are safe or unsafe.

Begin with noticing, not exposure. You can acknowledge a respectful action without granting unrestricted trust. You can also recognise a concern without treating every relationship as settled by it. Protecting yourself and allowing carefully chosen connection do not have to be mutually exclusive.

SAFETY, TRUST AND UNCERTAINTY · BELIEF 44

44. People hurt me

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What particular kind of hurt am I expecting?

2. What has this person actually shown about boundaries, honesty and accountability?

3. What pace or limit would allow me to make choices based on present evidence?

Optional deeper thread: Can trust be partial and earned over time, rather than something I must give completely or withhold completely?

SECTION 05

Blame, regret and making peace

I can make room for what comes next.

These entries explore holding on to hurt, blaming yourself, wishing you had known, struggling to forgive and waiting for someone else to change. Responsibility and repair can coexist with compassion.

IN THIS SECTION

45. I can't let that go

46. If I'd been different, it wouldn't have happened

47. It was my fault

48. I should have known

49. I can't forgive myself

50. It shouldn't be like this

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 45

45. I can't let that go

Possible root:

Keeping the hurt or argument present is how I protect what mattered. If I feel differently, it may seem as though the wrong no longer counts.

Replaying an old conversation in your mind

Notice when an old conversation returns. Are you seeking acknowledgement, understanding, repair, protection or something else? You can name the purpose without replaying the event.

When letting go feels like losing something

There is something you return to. Perhaps an apology never came, your account was dismissed or an important question was left unanswered. You may find yourself explaining the case again in your mind, as though the right words could finally secure the acknowledgement that was missing.

Being told to let go can feel like being asked to make the wrong smaller. You may fear that if the feeling softens, the other person gets away with it or your own experience becomes less real. Continuing to hold it can feel like loyalty to what happened.

That is one possible meaning, not the only reason painful memories recur. Grief, ongoing harm or trauma-related symptoms may need support of their own. Returning thoughts are not proof that you are choosing to remain hurt or refusing to move forward.

Keeping what matters

This differs from "It shouldn't be like this", which may involve an ongoing argument with present circumstances. Here, attention often returns to something unresolved. The word "let go" can also hide several different requests: stop pursuing accountability, stop thinking about it, forgive, reconnect or feel less pain. You do not have to agree to all of them, or any particular one.

You can maintain a boundary, keep an accurate record or pursue appropriate accountability while wanting less distress in daily life. You can also decide that a conversation or reconciliation would not help. Relief need not erase the truth.

If forgiveness feels like saying it was okay

You may hear “forgive” as a request to excuse someone, trust them again or give up the acknowledgement you never received. Perhaps forgiving them would feel like taking their side against yourself.

It can help to name what you fear losing. Is it your right to say that you were hurt? A boundary that protects you? The expectation that they take responsibility?

Those things can remain important as you consider what you want for your life now. Forgiveness is a personal choice. You can seek relief, maintain distance and decide what contact is appropriate without making forgiveness your goal.

If forgiveness is something you want to explore, you can decide what it means to you. It does not require approving what happened, restoring trust or renewing a relationship.

Start with what remains needed now. Perhaps it is recognition from someone trustworthy, advice about an ongoing situation or supported space for grief. A title and a sentence about what remains unresolved can give you enough to begin that conversation.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 45

45. I can’t let that go

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I mean when I say I cannot let this go?

2. What do I fear feeling less distressed would imply about what happened?

3. What form of acknowledgement, boundary or support might matter now, even if the other person never responds?

Optional deeper thread: If I felt more at peace, would it seem as though I was saying what they did was okay?

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 46

46. If I'd been different, it wouldn't have happened

Possible root:

Who I am causes other people's harmful or difficult behaviour. Changing myself is how I prevent it or keep connection.

Blaming who you are for how someone treated you

Notice when another person's mood makes you search for a version of yourself that would have prevented it. What are you assuming was within your control?

Making yourself the explanation

Someone is disappointed, distant or angry, and you begin revising yourself. You should have been easier, quieter, more impressive or less needy. You begin imagining a different version of yourself who could have prevented the reaction.

This belief can feel convincing because it offers something to change. If being better could have prevented the hurt, perhaps being better can prevent it next time. That may feel more manageable than recognising another person's choices or the limits of your influence.

You may notice it in apologising for a preference, concealing a need or adjusting your personality around someone's reactions. Being considerate is different from making your identity responsible for another person's conduct.

Separating your worth from what happened

This also differs from "It was my fault". That entry looks at responsibility for an event or action. Here, the blame is attached to who you are: "If I were different, this would not have happened."

If this connects with mistreatment or abuse, you do not need to examine the details alone. Being a child, needing care, having feelings or being yourself did not make you responsible for someone else's abuse. In present relationships, genuine harm deserves attention and support, not a more successful attempt to make yourself acceptable.

For a manageable example, separate three things: what you did, what the other person did and what you are concluding about yourself. You may have something specific to repair. That does not require accepting responsibility for someone else's choices or treating your existence as the problem.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 46

46. If I'd been different, it wouldn't have happened

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I imagine I should have been, rather than what I might have done differently?

2. Which parts of a recent situation belonged to me, to another person or to circumstances?

3. What need or preference do I hide when I start trying to prevent someone else's reaction?

Optional deeper thread: Does blaming myself give me a sense of control over something I could not control?

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 47

47. It was my fault

Possible root:

A harmful outcome means I failed to prevent it. Responsibility belongs to me even for parts I could not know or control.

Taking more than your share of the blame

When blame appears, notice the specific action you are holding against yourself and the share of the outcome you are assigning to it.

When you carry the blame

You return to an event and find the same verdict waiting. If you had acted sooner, said something different or paid more attention, perhaps it would not have happened. The thought may gather everything about the outcome into your own responsibility.

Guilt can sometimes identify a real action to acknowledge or repair. This page is about distinguishing that responsibility from blame for another person's decisions, chance, unavailable information or circumstances beyond your power. It does not require declaring that you have never done anything wrong.

A broad verdict can make this distinction difficult. "It was all my fault" offers little space to examine what was yours, what was shared and what was never yours to prevent. The same event may contain a mistake you can own and consequences you did not cause or control.

A fair share of responsibility

Unlike "If I'd been different, it wouldn't have happened", this belief usually points towards an action or omission. Unlike "I should have known", it may concern what you did with the information you had, rather than what you think you should have predicted. Naming the particular accusation helps keep those questions separate.

Age, authority, coercion and available choices matter. A child's dependence on adults is not equal responsibility for what adults do. Another person's abuse is their responsibility; your response under pressure did not make you deserve it. If the event is overwhelming, explore responsibility with appropriate support rather than putting yourself through a private trial.

Suppose you gave a friend the wrong time and they missed a plan. You can acknowledge the mistake, apologise and discuss any practical repair. If they then insult you, those words are their choice. Taking your part seriously does not require taking responsibility for every part of the exchange.

For a manageable example, write the facts and a proportionate next step. An apology, repair or practical change may be useful where responsibility is yours. Punishing yourself indefinitely is not the same as making amends, and accepting limits is not the same as evading accountability.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 47

47. It was my fault

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What exact action or omission am I blaming myself for?

2. What information, power and realistic choices did I have, and what belonged to others or circumstances?

3. Is there a proportionate repair available, or am I demanding that I undo something beyond my control?

Optional deeper thread: Do I believe continuing to blame myself is necessary to prove that I care?

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 48

48. I should have known

Possible root:

It was my job to foresee the outcome. Missing a sign means I failed to protect myself or someone else.

Judging past decisions with what you know now

Notice when a later fact enters your judgement of an earlier decision. Was that information actually available and understandable at the time?

What you know now, and what you knew then

Looking back, one detail stands out. A comment, a hesitation, a change you did not act on. Because you now know the ending, the detail can appear to have carried a clearer message than it did in the middle of everything else.

You may tell yourself the outcome was obvious, then begin scanning current situations so that you will never miss a sign again. The review of the past becomes an obligation in the present: check more closely, trust less easily, anticipate every possibility.

There may genuinely be lessons to take from an experience. The question is whether you are learning from information or requiring yourself to have known it before it was available. Not every ambiguous signal can be recognised as important in advance. Some relevant information may have been concealed from you.

Being fair to what you knew

"It was my fault" examines responsibility for an action. "I should have known" focuses on prediction. "I need to know what's going to happen" carries that demand forward into new decisions. These beliefs can reinforce one another, but each asks a different question.

A fair review includes what else was happening, what you had been told, what you could reasonably verify and what authority you had to act. It also includes uncertainty. Review the choice using what you knew then, while keeping anything you have learned since for future decisions.

Choose one manageable decision and write two short lists: what you knew then and what you learned afterwards. A useful lesson should be specific enough to guide action, such as checking a particular detail. "Never be caught off guard again" is a burden rather than an achievable plan.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 48

48. I should have known

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I now know that I did not know when I made the decision?

2. How clear was the supposed warning among the other information available then?

3. What specific lesson can I keep without assigning myself the job of predicting everything?

Optional deeper thread: Would I accept uncertainty as a reasonable limit for anyone in the same situation, including me?

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 49

49. I can't forgive myself

Possible root:

What happened means I don't deserve to feel at peace with myself. If I stop punishing myself, I'm letting myself off too easily.

When guilt gets in the way of enjoying life

Notice what happens when you have a moment of enjoyment or receive kindness.

When regret becomes a sentence

You may have apologised, changed your behaviour or done what you can to make things right. Yet whenever you begin to feel lighter, something brings you back: "How can I enjoy myself after what I did?"

Perhaps you replay a conversation, a decision or a period of your life. You imagine the person you wish you had been and compare yourself with them again and again.

You might accept that other people make mistakes while feeling that yours belong in a different category. Their circumstances deserve understanding. Your own explanations sound like excuses.

Sometimes this belief appears in small moments. You enjoy something, then remember. Someone speaks warmly about you, and you think they would feel differently if they knew. A new opportunity arrives, but accepting it feels like claiming a life you no longer deserve.

What forgiving yourself might mean to you

You may worry that forgiving yourself would minimise someone else's pain. Continuing to feel bad can seem like evidence that you understand how much it mattered.

Perhaps punishment feels necessary to keep you from repeating the behaviour. If you become kinder towards yourself, you fear you might become careless about its consequences.

You may also be waiting for another person to forgive you first. Their response can feel like the only permission you would accept to move forward. They may be unable or unwilling to offer it, or there may be no appropriate way to ask.

Underneath "I can't forgive myself" may be a firmer rule: "I don't deserve to."

Understanding what is yours to carry

Before deciding what forgiveness would involve, it helps to look carefully at what you are holding yourself responsible for.

You may regret something you chose and recognise harm that needs acknowledging. You may also be judging yourself with information you learned later, overlooking the constraints you faced, or accepting blame that someone else placed on you.

Feeling guilty cannot settle those questions by itself. If responsibility feels tangled or difficult to assess, a trusted person or professional may help you look at it more fairly.

Unlike "It was my fault", which asks where responsibility lies, this belief concerns whether you can ever allow yourself to move forward. Even where responsibility is clear, there are further questions: what needs to change, what repair is possible, and what would help you live differently now?

Responsibility can continue alongside peace

Taking responsibility may involve an apology, restitution, a change in behaviour or accepting consequences. Where another person has been hurt, their wishes and boundaries matter. Contacting them to seek relief from your guilt may not be welcome or appropriate.

Some things cannot be repaired in the way you wish. You may need to grieve that while deciding how you want to behave from here.

Giving yourself room to live does not require a favourable verdict on every past decision. You can remember what matters, continue making appropriate repairs and allow care into your own life.

If "forgiveness" feels too large or unfamiliar, begin with something more concrete. Describe what happened without adding insults about yourself. Name what you regret, what you have learned and what remains yours to do.

Then consider whether the way you are treating yourself helps you do it.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 49

49. I can't forgive myself

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I believe forgiving myself would say about how seriously I take what happened?

2. Is there a useful action still available to me, and whose needs would it serve?

3. What would taking responsibility look like without repeatedly attacking myself?

Optional deeper thread: If I stopped punishing myself, would it feel as though I was excusing what I did? What would help you recognise responsibility in your present actions, rather than measure it by how much you continue to suffer?

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 50

50. It shouldn't be like this

Possible root:

I cannot allow myself relief while the situation remains wrong. Accepting its reality would mean approving of it or giving up.

Struggling to accept how things have turned out

Catch one "shouldn't" and name the value or expectation involved. Is there action to take, a loss to acknowledge or both?

When reality feels impossible to accept

Something is unfair, careless or unlike what you reasonably expected. You return to how it should have been handled, what someone ought to understand or why the situation should never have arisen. You may be right about the problem and still find that repeating the case does not change what is available to you now.

It can also take the form of a wider conclusion about life itself: "Life is unjust," "Life is always difficult," or "There is more pain than joy in the world." These may be grounded in real experience. They become heavier when they turn every new difficulty into further proof, and leave no room to notice what has gone well.

The comparison can become personal: "Other people have it easier than I do." You see a friend with family help, good health or a partner who shares the load, and your own difficulties feel heavier beside theirs. Sometimes this is accurate. Some people do carry far more than others, and naming that can be an important part of being fair to yourself. The belief becomes painful when it turns into a fixed position, where you see only others' advantages and not their hidden struggles, and feel alone with what you carry. It can help to ask what you need, rather than what others have, and whether anyone could help you carry some of it.

This belief can attach your permission to feel any ease to a condition outside your control. Until someone understands, apologises or behaves differently, putting your attention elsewhere can feel like surrender. Resting from the argument seems to risk accepting the wrong.

Blame can move from naming a harmful action into judging the whole person: "They ruin everything," or "I could be okay if they were different." Returning to the particular behaviour can make it clearer what happened, what remains their responsibility and what you need now. You can take harm seriously without requiring an argument in your mind to keep proving that it mattered.

Recognising what is yours to do next is a separate question from who caused the difficulty. You may still be owed an apology or a repair. You can also consider what support, protection or practical action might help while that remains unresolved. Doing something for yourself does not make the wrong your fault, excuse their behaviour or require you to manage alone.

Acceptance is an ambiguous word. Here it can simply mean acknowledging the situation you have to respond to. It does not require agreement, forgiveness or abandoning efforts to change it. You can oppose something more clearly when you name both the facts and the choices you actually have.

Acknowledgement without approval

Unlike "I can't let that go", this may involve a current circumstance rather than an old event. Unlike "It's not safe for me to be angry", anger may be readily available. The difficulty is whether it leaves room for other feelings or practical decisions. Sadness or disappointment may be present too, but they are not assumed to be the real feeling underneath every anger.

Sometimes the needed response is advocacy, a boundary, a complaint or help leaving a situation. Sometimes it is grieving an expectation that will not be met. Reflection should not make an injustice your responsibility to tolerate.

For one manageable example, write what happened, what you wanted and what is within your influence. If no useful action is available today, consider what support would help you live through the situation without making yourself keep arguing with it every moment.

BLAME, REGRET AND MAKING PEACE · BELIEF 50

50. It shouldn't be like this

Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What value or reasonable expectation is involved in my "shouldn't"?

2. What remains the other person's responsibility, and what support or action is available to me while that remains unresolved?

3. What would acknowledging reality allow me to do without approving of it?

Optional deeper thread: Do I believe taking a break from distress would mean betraying what matters to me?

Your two lines

Use this page whenever you have found a belief that describes a current, manageable pattern. Something ordinary gives you a useful place to begin.

The belief I recognise:

The section where I found it:

If several beliefs fit, choose one to begin with and note any others that seem connected. You can bring that wider picture into a conversation without having to decide what causes what or work through every entry first. If none fits, you can write a sentence of your own or leave the workbook here.

An optional third line: the meaning this has for me in my own words:

Bring these two lines, and the optional third, to a conversation or a later practice. You can change the wording as your understanding develops.

To keep notes typed into this PDF, save a copy of the file after writing in the fields.

A little space for your own notes

You can type into these fields and save the PDF to keep your reflections.

Belief I am exploring

The section I recognise

What this means to me

What your section may be pointing towards

You may arrive at this page having recognised several entries rather than one. Sometimes what first seemed like a single belief turns out to involve several connected expectations. Those connections may sit within a section or cross between them.

For example, you might begin with "My needs come last", then notice "My needs are a burden" when you consider asking for help, "It's not safe for me to receive" when help is offered, and "I have to do it all" when you decide to manage alone. For some people, these expectations can reinforce one another. For others, similar responses have different meanings or reflect support that is genuinely missing.

Notice which entries connect for you, then choose one ordinary situation to explore. Keep the others in mind as context and return to them when it seems useful.

Self-worth, love and belonging: Questions about adequacy, failure, perfectionism, appearance, acceptance, love, being chosen, fear of being left, mattering and belonging. Notice whether a single outcome or another person's response has become a judgement about your worth. Being useful, being loved and feeling that your needs count are different experiences; give each its own meaning.

Needs, care and boundaries: Questions about duty, rest, receiving, anger, the imagined cost of success and whose needs get considered. Ask which commitments and sacrifices are genuinely required, what support is missing and whether your own needs or limits have room.

Choice and what feels possible: Questions about influence, choice, capability, responsibility, trusting your judgement, how the people close to you reflect on you and what remains possible. Consider what you can affect, what belongs to someone else and what you might learn. A real loss can deserve grief while other possibilities remain open.

Safety, trust and uncertainty: Questions about feeling safe with your own feelings, other people, the wider world and uncertainty. Notice whether the concern is emotional overwhelm, danger, lacking support, wanting something, bodily reliability, scarcity or what having money might mean. Let actual circumstances guide the protection and support you seek.

Blame, regret and making peace: Questions about hurt, responsibility, hindsight, self-forgiveness and making relief depend on another person changing. Separate who caused harm, what repair is appropriate and what might help you now. Making peace need not mean approval, forgiveness or renewed contact.

A section is a way to organise reading, not a psychological assessment or diagnosis. Connections across sections are welcome.

Beliefs I notice together

You may recognise one belief, several connected beliefs or much of a section. Use these few lines to name what stands out, if that would help.

These notes can be a starting point for a conversation. The connections may become clearer as you talk them through.

To keep notes typed into this PDF, save a copy of the file after writing in the fields.

A little space for your own notes

You can type into these fields and save the PDF to keep your reflections.

The first belief I noticed

Other beliefs I recognise

One everyday example

Five things to keep in view

· A familiar thought is not automatically a fact. Look at the particular situation as well as the strength of the feeling.

· Your circumstances matter. Reflection does not replace money, rest, access, fair treatment, safety or appropriate health care.

· Similar behaviour can have different meanings. You can withdraw because you need solitude, feel unwanted, expect harm or simply do not want that interaction. Let your experience distinguish them.

· Your own words are welcome. A useful description may be different from any sentence in this workbook.

· You do not have to change everything at once. One useful observation, a clearer boundary or a request for support can be enough for today.

Notice it in everyday life

As you go about your day, notice a moment when a familiar belief seems to appear. What was happening, and which words from the workbook came to mind?

You might make a brief note, or simply recognise the moment. There is no schedule to follow and nothing to complete.

If you would like to explore one example more closely, Step 3: Work With Your Pattern offers a practice sheet to use once you are familiar with the tapping basics.

When something still feels unresolved

Sometimes the same belief is present in different situations, with a different feeling or meaning each time. You may also recognise another belief alongside the one you began with. That can offer another place to explore when you feel ready.

It does not mean there must be a hidden root, or that you have missed something you should have found. What happened, your present circumstances and the support available to you all matter.

When something remains unresolved, you can pause, choose a smaller example or talk it through with someone you trust.

What comes next

You can finish here. Noticing a pattern does not oblige you to begin tapping, book a session or keep reading.

Where to go next

Step 2: Let It Go

Let It Go teaches you the tapping points, the basic sequence and what a full round looks like. That is all Step 2 asks of you.

Start Step 2: Let It Go

When you are familiar with the tapping process, Step 3, Work With Your Pattern, offers guided practice with a present feeling or a belief you recognise. This workbook is for recognition and reflection; it does not require a live tapping exercise on every belief.

If you would like support from Vicki, bring the two lines from Your two lines: the belief you recognised and the section where you found it. A recent example or a few notes can be useful, but neither is required. You do not need to arrive with the right explanation.

Book a free 15-minute chat, or contact vicki@vickiharding.com.

Warm regards, Vicki

A sentence to take with you

Choose a sentence you would like to make room for in your life.

Read the sentence and notice your response. Keep it if it feels useful, adapt it to your own words or leave it for another time.

Each reframe below stands on its own. You might find one that expresses something you already believe, or something you would like to explore. Choose the wording that feels useful to you today.

Self-worth, love and belonging

I have always been, and am, good enough.

An outcome is something that happened, not who I am.

I fully accept all of myself.

I am whole and good.

I can take responsibility for what I do without condemning who I am.

I am the right amount, just as I am.

My appearance does not determine my place or worth.

I am gentle, kind and fair with myself.

I can care about doing well and allow myself to be imperfect.

I belong, simply as I am.

I deserve good things in my life.

I can be fully known and fully loved.

I have a capacity for love, and I can learn to share it.

I can give and receive love freely.

People choose my company freely.

I can be present in a relationship without needing a guarantee about its future.

I matter.

I can belong as myself.

My life unfolds at my own pace.

Needs, care and boundaries

I share life's load with others.

Success can include rest, health and people who matter to me.

I rest freely.

I am worthy of receiving freely.

My anger shows me what matters to me.

My needs take their place alongside everyone else's.

I am worthy of care, and my needs belong in my relationships.

Choice and what feels possible

My voice and actions can make a difference.

I am allowed to make choices that include my needs.

I can care for others and respect my own limits.

The choices of the people close to me don't define who I am.

I can care deeply and feel at peace with what I can offer.

I trust my own judgement.

I am capable, and I can learn what I don't yet know.

New beginnings are always possible for me.

Safety, trust and uncertainty

I can take sensible precautions and notice when I am safe.

I can make room for my feelings and choose how I respond.

I can let people close and still be safe.

I am supported by people I trust.

I am free to want.

My body supports me, and I support my body.

I am worthy of a life with enough and more.

I can earn and keep money, and still be who I am.

I am at ease with the unknown.

I can build relationships based on care and mutual respect.

Blame, regret and making peace

I can honour what mattered and make room for peace.

I have always deserved care and respect.

I let go of blame I was never meant to hold.

I can assess my past choices fairly, using what I could reasonably know then.

I can take responsibility for my actions and allow myself peace.

I can acknowledge what is and stand by what matters to me.

About this resource

This workbook offers general reflection for adults. Its categories and examples are not diagnoses, validated personality types or conclusions about what happened in your past. It is not a treatment for a medical or psychological condition. Individual experiences vary, and no particular result is promised.

Support when you need it

If you're feeling overwhelmed, you can find support options in your country. If someone is in immediate danger, contact the local emergency service.

Vicki Harding offers complementary wellness services intended to support wellbeing alongside appropriate medical and mental health care. If something feels overwhelming, your circumstances are unsafe or you need help with a health concern, seek a qualified professional with relevant expertise. You do not have to work through difficult material alone.

Keep personal notes somewhere private and share only what you choose. Leave questions blank, write a different interpretation or stop whenever you wish.