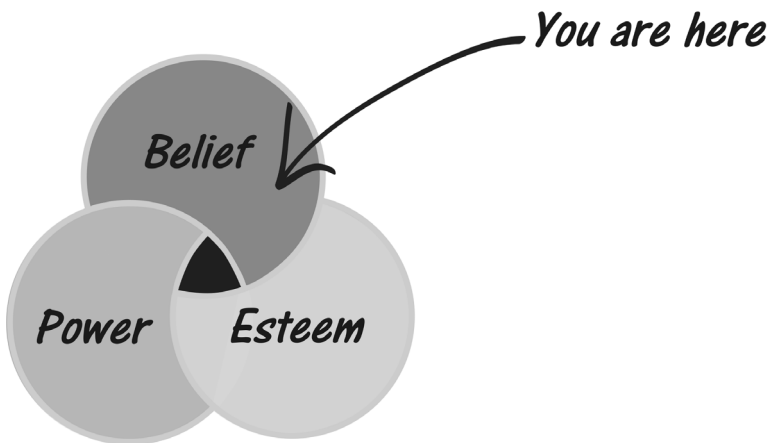


It's all about beliefs



That's it! If she can't even make an effort to say good morning, I'm done with her!

Sarah complained to her co-worker,

Every morning, Fiona comes into our office and completely ignores me. I always have to make the effort to say hello to her. She goes the whole day sitting next to me and doesn't say a single word to me. HOW HARD IS IT TO SAY GOOD MORNING? Am I that unimportant to her that she can't mutter two words? She makes me so angry. I've tried to make an effort to be nice to her, but she can get stuffed.

Let's figure out why Sarah is being affected by Fiona's behaviour, and what she can do about it.

Flexibility in your beliefs

A key to being more resilient is flexibility in your thinking. It's about knowing you have a choice in what you decide to believe.

Something happens in the world around you. You make sense of it and you process it through your own beliefs about that thing, and then you attribute meaning to it based on those beliefs.¹¹ This explains why two people can experience exactly the same event very differently. (Think back to how differently Celeste and Lesley experienced serving Harvey, in Chapter Two).

What are beliefs?

Your thoughts are just thoughts; you don't give them much meaning, power or energy. You think them into existence and then they disappear. They have little effect on you. You don't feel much when you think about them. They are just brain chatter. Research suggests we have anywhere from 20,000 to 70,000 thoughts each day.¹² That's a lot of brain chatter.

According to Dr. L Michael Hall, a belief is different to a thought. It is a confirmed thought.¹³ It's a thought you have said, 'YES - that is TRUE for me!' You have decided to change it from a just a thought into a belief. This process is often outside your conscious awareness.

As you confirm a thought as true for you, you send messages throughout your body via your central nervous system. You embody that thought as a belief. To you, it feels right. You may even say, *'I know it's true. I feel strongly about it.'* Your confirmed thoughts become your beliefs, and they make up your belief systems.

Types of beliefs

It is helpful to categorise beliefs into two broad categories (knowing there will be grey areas). The two categories of beliefs are: useful and limiting.

Because you decide what is true for you, you can decide to believe things that are either useful or not useful (limiting) in you achieving your goals.

For example, if your goal is to not let customers push your buttons, a useful belief is, *'I can choose what I think about this customer.'* A limiting belief that holds you back from achieving this goal could be, *'Customers can make me angry.'*

Useful beliefs	Limiting beliefs
Help you to achieve your goal	Hold you back from achieving your goal
Open up more choices	Restrict your choices
Empower you	Disempower you
<i>'I can choose what I think about customers'</i>	<i>'Customers can make me angry'</i>
<i>'No one can upset me without my permission'</i>	<i>'I am easily upset by customers'</i>
<i>'I am working on improving my communication skills'</i>	<i>'I am not good at confrontation'</i>
<i>'Sometimes I allow some customers to have a small effect on my emotions'</i>	<i>'Customers really push my buttons'</i>

How does flexibility in your beliefs help?

Being flexible in your beliefs empowers you to have more choice in how you respond. When you consciously choose what you believe you have more choice in how you interact with customers and co-workers. This allows you to decide how you respond, rather than react. You feel

more in control, meaning you can keep your cool when you want to.

For example, if you believe, '*Customers MAKE me angry*', you are right 😊

Here is a more useful belief:

Customers can't MAKE me feel anything. I CHOOSE to feel angry towards customers depending upon what I believe about their words or behaviour.

Back to Sarah and Fiona...

Let's assume, based on her statement, '*She makes me so angry*', that Sarah believes Fiona makes her angry. This currently feels true for Sarah – this has been her experience, she has had daily evidence of it. While Sarah believes it, it will be true for her. This is not blaming Sarah or saying it's her fault, it's about understanding that what Sarah believes about other people making her angry will affect how she experiences other people – co-workers, customers, managers, family, friends and strangers.

When Sarah says, '*She makes me so angry*', she is giving her power away and blaming Fiona for how she feels. What she is actually saying is '*I am choosing to feel angry at Sarah because of what I believe about her behaviour*'. It's actually the belief Sarah has about Fiona's behaviour that results in her feeling angry. Sarah is making herself angry by what she believes about Fiona's behaviour.

If Sarah wanted to, she could experience Fiona's behaviour in a different way, so she wasn't bothered by it.

How could she do that? By increasing her flexibility in what she believes about the behaviour. Let's explore how to do that.

CHANGING YOUR BELIEFS

If you believe '*Customers make me angry*', that affects your behaviour, and you walk around feeling, acting, knowing and believing customers make you angry. You will look for evidence to keep confirming it as true, (because you want to be right). Then you say to yourself, '*See! I told you. I was right! Customers make me angry!*' Your belief is reconfirmed as true.

Here's an important piece of information often overlooked; just as you can turn any thought into a belief by deciding it is true for you, you can also un-confirm a belief. You can un-believe it! You have the power to turn a belief back into a thought. In other words, you can change your beliefs if you want to. My guess is, at one point in your life you believed Santa was real, and now you don't. That's an example of you un-believing something. Your beliefs are not permanent. You are never stuck with a belief, you always have a choice.

How useful are your beliefs about yourself, your work, and your customers?

Do you need to change any limiting beliefs to more useful ones?

If you are aware that you have limiting beliefs that are holding you back from choosing how you respond to

customers, you can use the Triple A process to change them.¹⁴

Use the Triple A process to explore the usefulness of your beliefs:

Awareness: Find out what you currently believe.

Audit: Check if that belief is useful in relation to what you want to achieve.

Adjust: If it's not a useful belief, change it to a more useful one.

Choose something in your past that pushed your buttons (maybe a trigger); for example, something a customer said to you that 'made' you angry, upset, hurt etc.

1. Awareness: What do you believe about having your buttons pushed by customers?

What did you make the customer's words mean in the past?

2. Audit: Is it useful?

In what way, if any, is believing that about XYZ useful in helping you achieve your goal of choosing how you respond to customers?

- How useful was the belief?
- How did you feel when you believed that about it?
- Was that feeling useful?

- Do you want to change what you believe about it (and, therefore, change the feeling that goes with it)?

3. Adjust: If it is not useful, what do you want to believe about it?

Play with and try out different beliefs. Challenge yourself to come up with at least five different beliefs (just make them up!). Coming up with five different beliefs forces you to be more flexible in your thinking (part of being resilient), and it also gives you more options to choose from. When you get the hang of it, aim for ten different beliefs.

Ask yourself:

- i. What else COULD you believe about the customer's words?

'I believe this customer is having a go at me because he's upset about his situation. Interesting.'

- ii. And what else COULD you believe about the customer's words?

'I believe this customer is great at being rude. I wonder what this (situation) means to him that has resulted in him feeling this way?'

- iii. And what else COULD you believe about the customer's words?

'I believe the words this customer is saying belong to him, and are nothing to do with me.'

iv. And what else?

'I believe this customer thinks he is going to hurry me up by being aggressive towards me. How fascinating! I wonder why he thinks that?'

v. And what else?

'I believe his words are directed at me, but if I wasn't serving him he would have said these words to anyone who happened to be serving him.'

As you step back and look over your list of possible beliefs, which belief do you like the best? Which belief will help you feel the way you want to feel?

Now choose your favourite belief and try it on by saying, *'Yes, it is true for me.'*

Notice how you feel when you choose that new belief.

Check that the new belief helps you feel how you want to feel about the customer's words. If not, try on a different belief (go ahead and try them all if you want to - you get to choose).

It's like going into a clothing shop and trying on different jackets. Some feel terrible; you know immediately they are not for you. Others feel OK, and then you try the one on that you love! You know when it really suits you because it feels fabulous, and *you* feel fabulous wearing it. Give yourself permission to try on several different beliefs until you find the one that fits best for you.



Triple A process in action

Awareness: What do you believe?

Sarah, what do you believe about Fiona?

I believe Fiona makes me angry. I hate that she gets to me - I wish I could just let it go.

Audit: Is it useful?

How is believing 'Fiona makes me angry' useful in helping you not care about it, and just let it go?

It's not useful. In fact, I'm over it.

Adjust: What do you want to change it to?

What *could* you believe instead of, 'Fiona makes me angry'?

I'm not sure.

That's ok. Here are examples of alternatives...

- 'I believe no one can make me angry; however, I can choose to feel angry if I want to.'
- 'I believe even though I consider manners / respect as important, other people don't, and that's their choice.'
- 'I believe Fiona's behaviour has nothing to do with me.'

- 'I believe Fiona is responsible for her choices, not me.'

Which belief sits best with you?

I like, 'I believe Fiona's behaviour has nothing to do with me'. I'll use that next time she ignores me'

When you give Fiona's behaviour that new belief, how do you feel?

I feel neutral about it. I feel nothing.

Is this belief a more useful belief?

Yes. I'm kind of excited for her to ignore me again tomorrow morning, so I can try it out.



ACTIVITY – Be a detective

How to use the Triple A process at work

The next time you notice yourself feeling annoyed, upset, frustrated etc., be like a detective:

Step 1. Awareness: (What do I believe about it?)

What do I believe about X (something) for me to feel Z (annoyed, upset, frustrated etc.)?

Step 2. Audit: (Is that belief useful?)

Is that belief useful in helping me feel how I want to feel?

Step 3. Adjust: (What could I believe about it?)

'What did I believe about it?' (in the past for me to
feel this way)

'What else *could* I believe about it?'

'And what else *could* I believe about it?'

'And what else?'

'And what else?'

'And what else?'

(Try them all on until one feels fabulous)

'Which belief do I want to choose *now*?'

(Say YES to that belief)

'When I give it that new belief, how do I feel?'

Go with fabulous.



Quick Tips

- When you are observing an abusive customer's behaviour, step right into curiosity and think the following words to yourself, 'How fascinating'. 'I wonder...' 'Wow', 'Astounding! 'How intriguing!'
- Sometimes we are loyal to our beliefs, even if they don't serve us. We are reluctant to change them. If this is you, ask yourself, 'What's it costing me to keep this belief?'
- Play lightly. Look at your beliefs through a lens of continuous improvement. How can you make incremental improvements?

