

by Santosh Sachdeva

No belief is right or wrong. It is either empowering or limiting

Ever heard the story of the four-minute mile? For years people believed that it is impossible for a human being to run a mile in less than four minutes until Roger Banister proved it wrong in 1954. Within one year, 37 runners broke the belief barrier. And the year after that, 300 other runners did the same thing.



What happens if you put an animal in a pond? Any animal, big or small, will swim its way through. What happens when someone, who does not know how to swim, falls in deep waters? You drown. If an animal who has not learned swimming could escape by swimming, why not you? Because you believe you will drown while the animal does not.

You have used a computer keyboard or a typewriter. Ever wondered why the alphabets are organized in a particular order in your keyboard? You might have thought it is to increase the typing speed. Most people never question it. But the fact is that this system was developed to reduce the typing speed at a time when typewriter parts would jam if the operator typed too fast.

These three cases show the power of our beliefs. There is no other more powerful directing force in human behavior than belief. Your beliefs have the power to create and to destroy. A belief delivers a direct command to your nervous system.

Have you heard about the placebo effect? People who are told a drug will have a certain effect will many times experience that effect even when given a pill without those properties.

I use a snake in my workshops for children to show them how unrealistic some of their beliefs are. Students of a school in New Delhi, India, said snakes are slippery, slimy and poisonous. After doing an exercise for changing beliefs, they handled my snake and found it to be dry and clean. They also remembered that only three types of poisonous snakes exist in India.

Have you ever scanned the 'to-let' advertisements in newspapers? Many say 'South Indians preferred'. Why? Many house owners told me that it is easier to get South Indians to vacate. The belief was that South Indians do not have the guts to fight. Now you figure out the impact of LTTE supremo Prabhakaran and Southern sandalwood smuggler Veerappan in changing this belief!

It is also our belief that determines how much of our potential we will be able to tap. So you better examine some of your beliefs minutely. For example, do you believe that you can excel in whatever

you do? Do you believe you are bad in mathematics? Do you believe that other people don't like you? Do you believe life is full of problems? What are your beliefs about people?

No belief is right or wrong. It is either empowering or limiting. A belief is nothing but the generalization of a past incident. As a kid if a dog bit you, you believed all dogs to be dangerous. To change a particular behavior pattern, identify the beliefs associated with it. Change those beliefs and a new pattern is automatically created.

I read this incident in a New York newspaper. "She met him in a singles' bar and they talked for a while. He offered her a drink and she enjoyed his company. Then he offered to drop her back home. While driving back, she realized that they were moving through narrow and strange roads. 'Oh God where is he taking me?' she thought but did not have the guts to ask. She cursed her decision to get into his car. All of a sudden she saw him taking a turn back into the highway just near her house. Smiling, he said: 'I took a short cut'."

Did this story end the way you thought? Review your beliefs now and find out which ones are empowering and which ones you need to change.

Questions to discuss

- ❖ What do you think makes a belief empowering or limiting?
- ❖ Do you hold any beliefs which you think may be limiting you?
- ❖ Have you ever had a belief that you thought was empowering but ending up being limiting?
- ❖ Have you ever had a belief that you thought was limiting but ended up being empowering?
- ❖ Can you change your beliefs? If so how?