

## Project #2:

# Belief Management

**Belief Management** is skill in understanding what beliefs are, how they affect a person's life, and how to manage them. The purpose of mastering this skill is so we can shape our experiences in the way we prefer and perform to our satisfaction in our lives.

### What is a Belief?

**Be•lief is to invest something with love.** The old English word “lief” is a variant of “love”. Love is awareness of unity.

For example, if I believe I love my wife, I will enjoy being together with her. If I believe I love my job, I will enjoy doing it. If I believe I love owning a car, I will enjoy having one near me and driving it. In each case love means that there is a sense of unity with something. The greater the love, the greater is the draw toward unity.

**A belief therefore is a mental construction by which a person defines something that he or she has invested with love.** Belief in something attaches importance to it and gives it more or less an appearance of reality. The more belief a person invests in something, the more real it appears to be. The creation of a belief is an act of defining the boundaries or space that the belief occupies in whatever dimension that a person may imagine. Love may involve trust, confidence, affection, desire, a sense of truth, validity, existence, intensity, or any other additional quality one may wish to endow it with.

Thoughts are beliefs. Words are beliefs. Experiences are beliefs. Anything that we can define in any way vaguely or clearly is a belief. The systematic study of beliefs is a very general science, so the systematic management of beliefs is a very powerful technology that can change your experience of the world.

Love can manifest over quite a range from mild interest, liking, affection, intense desire, and even to fixation and fanaticism. Oddly enough, love also can flip over and become mild annoyance, dislike, resistance, intense detestation, or even fixation and fanatical hatred. Desire and resistance turn out to be beliefs cut from the same cloth of love.

Essentially belief in something means bestowing love upon that something in the form of giving it your **attention**.

**Attention is awareness that is focused into a specific direction or dimension in order to create the experience of a belief.** When attention is lacking, experience is lacking. During deep sleep attention usually is almost completely lacking, and therefore so is experience. We direct attention with a quality of awareness called the will. Attention can be defined into various modes of **perception** and **feeling**. A consistent flow of attention through different modes of perception such as thoughts, emotions, memory, imagination, seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling is what we call **consciousness**.

**Will is the ability to decide something.** Deciding is the basic activity in the creation of definitions. Thus, we use the will quality of awareness when we want to generate a flow of attention that defines beliefs within awareness.

**Awareness** is pure undefined **existence**, an accepting of all possibilities without any bias or prejudice. It is not bounded in any way by definitions, so there is nothing we can really say about it with the limited words of language. To experience awareness, you just experience what you are experiencing at the moment, accepting it without any judgment. Try it. Oh yes. The trouble with just trying it right now by being aware of what is in the moment is that what you experience is your current beliefs, and these defined beliefs overshadow the pure undefined awareness that is their source. To get closer to source awareness, decide to do some simple action, and then do it. When you have finished that little exercise, come back and continue reading.

Did you do the “awareness” experiment by making a decision to do something and then doing it? If so, you will notice that you went through several stages. Before you came back to the text, you did something. Just prior to doing it, you decided what you were going to do. Just prior to that, you had no idea what you were going to do, because I did not tell you what to do. I gave you that freedom in the exercise. However, you were not dead. You simply hung there in existence floating in an ocean of endless possibilities. This is freedom. You may have felt some oddness or uncomfortable confusion, a desire to do the exercise right, an awkward doubt about whether you were doing it right, or an urge to decide on something – anything – and get on with it. After a few moments certain possibilities started to emerge as distinct choices. These specific possibilities tend to be prior beliefs that you have invested

attention in. They may relate to your surroundings at the moment. At some point, in order to finish the exercise, you decided on something and then did it. Otherwise, you chose not to do the exercise, an option also included in your freedom.

This little exercise is very powerful. If you do the exercise several times, you may start to get a “feel” for the state of pure awareness. However, do not fool yourself. Having a “feel” for the state of pure awareness is a belief about pure awareness, and **not** pure awareness. Pure awareness is devoid of any specific thought. Or we can say it is the superposition of all possible thoughts. It is a state of total freedom, because you have the maximum number of options available to choose from and no limitations. The only limitations to pure awareness that can occur are limitations that you impose on it by defining beliefs on it and limitations you impose on your beliefs about who you are.

We create a belief simply by making the decision to define it into existence. How you define it is entirely up to you. The purpose of the belief is to provide a specific experience. Your belief is your way of defining the experience you propose to experience. We express love by our willingness to experience one or more belief. Without any beliefs we can not identify any quality of love. Such a “love” would be boundless but meaningless in the sense that it would lack any specific content. Desire is a strong flow of love toward some defined experience.

Willingness is expression of the will. Awareness includes as one of its possibilities the ability to decide. Our ability to decide is what we call will. The two main effects of making a decision are that something is defined as a belief and a **viewpoint** for experiencing the defined belief manifests. The viewpoint appears to separate the viewer (i.e. the decider) from the belief. This facilitates the purpose of defining the belief, which is to experience the “flavor” of the belief. Each different belief has a different flavor that is determined by the details of its definition. Multiple similar and different beliefs can coexist and may interact to form belief systems of varying complexity.

At the basis of all there is only awareness with its potential of will. When will is active, it decides and generates beliefs. When will is passive, it accepts and experiences. During the process of experience the viewer integrates with the belief that is viewed. When this is done with total acceptance, the viewpoint (i.e. the default definition of the viewer as the viewpoint of a definer of something) and the belief (i.e. the definition in which loving attention is invested) completely integrate

and then both disappear and return to their original potential condition in pure awareness. They become virtual viewpoints and virtual beliefs. Experience also becomes a potential instead of an actual state.

If they do not integrate, some aspect of the belief (and the corresponding viewpoint that defines it) will remain and float around in awareness until the viewpoint is ready to fully integrate with the belief that it has defined.

Thus, Belief Management involves the exploration of

- 1. Will, Definition, and Decision Making**
- 2. Attention Directed Through Modes of Perception, Feeling, and Experience**
- 3. Beliefs, Belief Systems and Techniques for Creating and Dissolving Beliefs and Experiences**

#### **1. Will, Definition, and Decision Making**

When a person learns how to manage the will, decision making becomes easier. One way to develop the will is to practice the Ocean Awareness Meditation procedure and Eye of Wisdom exercise described in the Project #1 of this Plan. Here is another exercise that develops the will.

- Practice deliberately putting attention on different objects. It helps to start with things that you enjoy. You can work your way from pleasant objects of attention to including unpleasant ones as well. You can also do this exercise mentally, putting attention deliberately on certain people, places, objects, events, memories, ideas, and so on. Once you can do the exercise mentally and by visual observation, you can expand to include actions.
- Choose an object that you find interesting and examine it closely. Describe it in great detail. You can write down your description, speak it to a friend, or do it mentally. Writing allows you to be more precise and to review your description. On the other hand, mental description allows you to examine and describe more objects in a short span of time. You can also just carry a notebook and take notes of the most interesting observations and any insights you discover. Regular practice of writing descriptions can lead to improvement in your writing skills.
- Each day set at least one reasonable objective that you can achieve and would like to achieve and then go achieve it. This is dynamic attention management. If you do not complete your objective, you can choose a less ambitious objective for the next day. You can also break a larger objective into smaller stages or

components.

- Write down each daily objective as the heading for a daily diary entry. At the end of the day take a few moments to note whether you achieved the objective and any comments or insights for future reference. You can also use that time to set your target objective for the next day. The next target may be a new objective or the next segment of a previous objective.
- Decide on a goal that you care about and would like to achieve. Set a target date for achieving the goal. The target date could be immediately in the moment, within a few minutes or hours, by a certain number of days, weeks, months, or even years. Announce the intended goal to somebody you can trust. If the date of achievement is for a day or more in the future, write the intention and intended date of completion in your journal. Ask the person you tell of your intention to notice whether you achieve it in a timely manner and to comment on any distractions or counter-productive activities that he or she notices.

## 2. Attention Directed Through Modes of Perception, Feeling, and Experience

Attention skills can have great impact on efficiency, creativity, flexibility, patience, and levels of achievement. Many people today are very confused about issues of identity, personal goals in life, and why they are here on the planet. Many are just plain unhappy and go around blaming their problems on others when they easily could learn to manage their own lives very effectively independent of what others may think or do. People can begin to exercise attention effectively once they strengthen willpower. Many people think that the most important part of attention is to “pay attention” – to concentrate on the task at hand. This is what we are taught in the schools. There is more to it than simply paying attention.

Attention is a kind of energy. We can use the will to direct it in quite a few ways other than focusing on something with concentration. It also turns out that concentration is quite effortless once we know how to manage the attention.

- **Deliberate Shifting of Attention** is something that already plays an important role in the exercises for developing the will. Shifting and fixing of attention are both governed by the level of your interest. When we feel bored, the attention tends to flow on toward other topics. When we feel interested, the attention flows in the direction of greater charm. When we find something of great interest, the attention tends to stay fixed on it without any effort, exploring it and expanding it as a reality. This is the value of arranging your goals according to **priority**. The highest priority goals should be the ones that you enjoy most and

consider most important. They will automatically tend to hold your attention. Attention tends to flow continually, but it will return over and over to something that is either very charming or a great nuisance. Therefore, if you want to fix attention on something, direct it toward something you really love or something that is a real problem.

- **Prioritizing is a simple way to increase your efficiency.** The first step to prioritizing is to make a list of things you plan to do or want to do. When you do this, step back and survey your whole life, not just your immediate concerns. You can have goals in any area of your life. There are also several different types of goals. Some are short-term, and some are long term. Some are assistive. For example, if you want to buy a house, you may have an assistive goal to prepare the money for the down payment. If you want to be a doctor, you may have to put yourself through medical school and an internship. There are also meta-goals. A meta-goal is a special type of generally assistive goal that helps you perform better on all goals and objectives. For example, the goal of learning how to prioritize can increase your efficiency. The projects in this Plan for a Planet are all meta-goals, because they set the stage for achieving much more ambitious goals. Another meta-goal might be “I have good learning skills, so I learn new things and master them quickly.” The most important goal in your list is your Mission Statement. Every company needs a Mission Statement, so that customers are very clear about what product or service the company provides and employees are clear about what their dedication and responsibilities are toward the company and customers. Your Mission Statement is the overall goal of your life. All the other goals on your list should contribute to it.
- **Discover Your Mission.** A Mission is different from a goal in that you complete goals, but do not complete Life Missions. A mission accomplished is simply a goal that you have achieved. A real Mission keeps expanding as you explore it. Therefore, your Mission Statement should indicate an activity to which you are committed and that you totally enjoy doing your whole life. Many people have no such deep purpose in life. They simply live from day to day, working at a job to earn some money to support a family and pay the bills. In between they seek a bit of entertainment to pass the time. Some people come to this planet for a vacation. Some go to the other extreme and take on a religious Mission to help people by persuading them to believe in a particular belief system. A true Mission is something that you can do, enjoy doing, and that incidentally contributes to the welfare of others. Your Mission should benefit you and benefit

humanity. Your Mission should assist you and those around you to grow and learn. It is also nice, but not necessary, if you receive some recognition for your Mission. The key is that this is your top priority and it enables you to live and grow in your Happy Spot.

- **The Happy Spot Exercise** involves coming up with an experience that you deeply enjoy. Survey your life experience for the things that make or have made you feel happy. You may jot down a few possibilities that come to mind. Then pick the one that attracts you the most and write it on a separate sheet of paper. Put some attention on that topic (object, person, event, idea, activity, or whatever it is) for a minute or two and notice what aspect of that topic you enjoy the most. Jot that down under your topic. Next consider that aspect of your topic for a while and notice what aspect of that aspect you enjoy the most. Jot that down as a sub-aspect under the first aspect. Continue in this manner until you end up with the core aspect that you enjoy the most. This may be either more specific or more general than your first topic. Sometimes it may not have any direct relation to the original topic you chose. In any case, your final result should give you insight into where to put your attention to deliberately increase the amount of enjoyment and satisfaction in your life. If you have really gone deep with this exercise, you will come up with your Life Mission.
- For example, perhaps you chose as a happy spot the fun you have playing tennis on weekends. What you really like about this is that your partner is an old classmate, and the weekend tennis match is when you get to see him. What really charms you about that is his sense of humor. When you chat, he tells funny stories and weird jokes that crack you up every time. The thing you like about his humor is that he really understands in a clever wacky way why people behave the way they do. Understanding how people behave gives you insights into how to deal with your clients. You like this because you notice it gives you more fun with your clients when you go back to work on Monday and helps you give them more satisfaction. In this case you start off with weekend tennis matches and end up realizing that you can develop your own insights into how people behave by learning to observe them closely. By learning to do this for yourself rather than depending on insights gleaned from your friend's jokes, you can improve the quality and enjoyment of your work. You also may substantially increase your earnings. By putting attention on this aspect you may take your life to a new level of achievement and happiness. It may even evolve your career in new and creative directions.

- **The Study of the Nature of Happiness** ultimately leads to the discovery that the **pursuit** of happiness is a waste of time. Happiness is a personal feeling that is not connected to any other condition. Watching the same movie one person laughs and another feels bored. How happy you are in any situation is your own personal responsibility, because it is an experience you generate from your own belief in and about happiness. No person, or object, or event can give you happiness. It is a gift you give yourself. The same is true of love. How many romances go on the rocks or never even get started because someone is looking for another person to love them? If a person does not love himself, how can he expect another to love him? Chapter One of the **Book of Love** says, “Love Thyself. That is the only love you can guarantee yourself to get.” Chapter Two says, “Love costs nothing to give and you can give it away and your supply will never run short. Therefore, once you can love yourself, love others. That guarantees that at least someone beside you gets some love.” Chapter Three says, “You have no right to expect others to love you even if you love them first. However, if you persist with Chapters One and Two, sooner or later you will encounter someone who also has learned those chapters. Then you may be able to share unbounded love. You will also understand how a true belief in love will generate a true experience of love.” Chapter Four in the **Book of Love** says, “What you experience is a perfect reflection of what you truly believe. Observe closely what you experience, and you will know precisely what you truly believe in your heart. Truly change your belief, and your experience will change to match the new belief. This is the technology of love.” By the way, compassion is the ability to observe other people and see how they are reflecting your own beliefs in their behaviors. Therefore observing people can be very instructive.
- **Deliberate Dividing of Attention** seems like a distraction. However, it is actually an advanced tool for attention management. An ordinary employee only has to focus on the job he is doing. The owner of a business must be able to have in mind all departments of his business simultaneously. The trick to dividing the attention is to first learn how to expand the attention so that it encompasses a larger space and includes a larger range of items. The tradeoff when attention is expanded is that you lose focus. To see something clearly, you must focus attention on it. Anything that you focus attention on becomes clear. On the other hand, anything that is unclear means that attention is not focused on it. For example, look at the palm of your hand. What do you see? Flesh, some wrinkles, perhaps some calluses and some outlines of veins. When your



attention is on the palm, you can see all the wrinkles very clearly. Now place a pen next to your hand and focus your attention on it. You can still see your palm right next to the pen, but now the wrinkle lines on your palm are fuzzy. If you move the palm about a foot away from the pen, the wrinkles will disappear into a blur. However, if you shift your attention back to the palm, the lines will again become clear and the pen will become fuzzy. Thus, attention management is the key to clarity with regard to any object or any issue.

- The owner of a company cares about his company because it is his creation. He includes the whole company within his vision. That vision is fuzzy, because it contains many items and aspects. However, the owner knows how the business should operate, and this serves as his ideal mental template. He then holds the whole company in awareness and rotates attention through each department on a regular basis, observing the performance at all levels. His managers assist by reporting to him on the details of each department. Whenever he notices a serious discrepancy between actual performance and his ideal template, he focuses attention there to see the situation clearly and then takes appropriate action to remedy or upgrade the situation. This gives him efficiency to manage a complex operation. As a person widens the expansion of attention and attains skill in rotating for flexibility of viewpoint and zooming in for clarity of details, he becomes able to manage larger and larger enterprises.
- **Freeing Attention from Fixations** is an important skill. Focusing attention on something over time can become automated as a habit. This is useful, because it takes much less energy to maintain a familiar habit than to focus on something unfamiliar. When we fixate attention on something, we habitually put a lot of attention on it. The downside of this is that it greatly limits our freedom. Freedom is the ability to choose many options. The more the options, the greater the freedom. When attention becomes fixated due to habitual focus on something, a person surrenders freedom and becomes a slave to the fixation. Even pleasurable experiences can result in fixation, and serious fixation can result in physical or mental addictions. You do not really want to put attention there, but the habit is so thoroughly automated that you do not know how to change the pattern of attention. However pleasurable something is, the attention should retain the flexibility to flow in other directions, because that is the inherent nature of attention – to flow about and explore. Fixation can become the serious downside of concentration – successful concentration on something that a person now has decided to resist. Serious intense fixations can lead to fanaticism and

insanity. Such autistic rigidity locks a person into a tight box. Some people enjoy living in tight little boxes. Anything with rigid boundaries reflects an intensely held belief. The simple way out of a fixation, if you want to leave, is to deliberately change the subject. Put attention on the fixation for a while, and then put it on something else. Go back and forth observing the details of whatever the attention is focused on. By doing this you will learn more about your fixation and about lots of other things as well. Soon you will find other areas of interest and feel free to come and go to and from your “fixation”. You can not ever completely get rid of a fixation, because every possibility always exists at least in a virtual state in pure awareness. This is also why you do not have to worry when you seem to lose something you may have invested a lot of attention in, such as money, an intimate partner, a job, your health, and so on. These creations also always exist as potentials in pure awareness. It is just a matter of managing attention so that you direct it to beliefs you prefer, and the experiences you enjoy then show up more regularly, and the situations you do not prefer show up less frequently. Even better is to get to the space where every possibility is wonderful, even if it is an interlude of loss with respect to favorite fixations.

### **3. Beliefs, Belief Systems and Techniques for Creating and Discreating Beliefs and Experiences**

Belief management skills can have a tremendous beneficial effect on the achievements and happiness of people, yet such skills are not given much if any attention in the schools. I went from kindergarten to Ph.D. and was offered millions of beliefs to put my attention on, but no school ever promoted a course in belief management. About the closest we come in our traditional education system to study of belief management is that many schools offer classes on business management and some aspects of psychology, but such classes are very restricted in scope and application compared to the generality of belief management. Our lives are filled with many kinds of beliefs. These include beliefs about personal identity, family and friends, business activities, social interactions, intimate relations, career, money, health, politics, power, skills and abilities, the past, the future, the physical world, technical disciplines, religion, philosophy, and much more. We also have beliefs that make judgments about the various beliefs that we hold or that we believe others hold.

Fortunately during the past few decades much research has been done on belief management, and programs that teach belief management are now available that

produce remarkable results and are starting to broaden the perspective of the traditional education system. Any belief management program must steer clear of indoctrinating any particular set of beliefs, as that would tend to preclude a student's exploration and defining of his own preferred beliefs. Even the beliefs about the relationship between beliefs and experiences or that a belief can be created, manifested, modified, and discreated are optional.

An interesting exercise is to choose a belief that you feel you believe with some certainty, and then assert the opposite belief. See if you can adjust your viewpoint so as to be able to view a situation from several different viewpoints. Play around with beliefs. They can be a lot of fun. For example, take a political topic and explore your own view on it. Then consider the views of other parties regarding that topic and see if you can see the topic the way they do. If you have problems adjusting to a particular viewpoint, read what proponents of that viewpoint say to support their position. The point is not to abandon your own preferred viewpoint, but to learn to appreciate that others may view the same issue from a variety of different viewpoints and may cherish their viewpoints as much or more so than you do. Skill in this exercise can lead to understanding others and perhaps also to ability in reconciling conflicting viewpoints. The world can always use more peacemakers. (belief)

- **The Intensity with which a person holds a belief** determines how real it seems. What do you believe is really real? The ability to create or discreate an experience in your life depends on your skill in adjusting the level of intensity with which you hold the beliefs that underlie the experience. The cycle of creation begins with pure awareness. In awareness all possible beliefs coexist in a virtual state rather like the virtual particles in the vacuum state of physics. The level of intensity is so low that you can not detect a virtual belief in consciousness unless you are very experienced with subtle perception. It seems lost, gone, or at least invisible and inaccessible. It is in the discreated condition.
- The first step of creation occurs when the will (the potential belief that awareness can decide to define itself in some way) begins to define something. This activates the will from a virtual belief to an actual belief. The will becomes a viewpoint, and the belief it defines becomes a reality. This reality can range from a subtle thought or imagination to a very solid gross physical object. Once the belief is defined, it must be experienced, because that is the purpose of creating beliefs. Put another way, defining a belief separates awareness into the will as a perceiver and a belief as an object of perception. This begins the

manifesting of a subjective and objective world. The true reality is that the two (subject and object, or perceiver and object of perception, or will and belief) are one awareness. The belief is a projection by the will of awareness into a certain form. Experience completes the cycle by absorbing the belief form back into the will and the two again become virtual possibilities in awareness. In the absence of any actual beliefs, the will remains virtual, and all beliefs remain virtual.

- Belief Systems arise when the will generates a collection of various beliefs and arranges them in some form of relationships. The basic cycle of creation and discreation takes no time at all and also takes up no space. Time and space are beliefs used to structure belief systems. They are basically memory devices for keeping track of complex belief systems. The trick to creating belief systems of any complexity is to delay or resist the experience phase of the cycle. You create a group of beliefs and refuse to reintegrate the will to the beliefs. The viewer then remains separate from the beliefs and they generate a cosmos that is governed by the resisted beliefs. There can be a whole hierarchy of beliefs. Beliefs can be linked or independent. The whole thing can get very sophisticated and may operate in many dimensions. Any time you like, you can also simplify it by deciding to experience all the projected beliefs. If you absorb them all, bingo, you end up back in pure awareness. One of the simplest ways to get a quick feel for this is to expand your attention until it goes way out beyond the universe and reduces the universe in all its dimensions to a tiny speck inside a vast sea of silent wakefulness. Another way is to practice the Ocean Awareness Meditation described in Project #1. However you do it, once you relax all the resistances on beliefs, you end up back in pure awareness.
- **Indoctrination** is the practice of putting ideas into the minds of other people. The funny thing about indoctrination is that it implies that you first must believe in the existence of the mind, and then you must believe in the existence of “other people”. Take a good look at what you would like other people to believe. Who believes that with a lot of intensity? What if other people are projections of you, and what you see as other people are no more than reflections in a mirror? If you want to change the image you see when you look in the mirror, what do you do? Do you work on the mirror or work on yourself? A great deal of time, money, and effort is expended on propaganda, advertising, and other forms of indoctrination. Whatever effectiveness indoctrination may have as a communication tool, changing yourself may have the most immediate and lasting effect on your life.

- **Invisible Beliefs** can be actual as well as virtual. They are very useful most of the time, because you can put them into the background and let them automatically produce certain experiences that you like to have around but do not want to put a lot of conscious effort into. These are like utility software programs that run automatically on your computer in the background. Your heartbeat is an example in your body. So is your digestive system. Automated belief systems are essential to the operation of the physical body and we use them in many other areas of life as well. They only become a problem when your life situation becomes such that you do not want the experience they produce any more. Invisible automated beliefs are invisible because the attention is mostly directed elsewhere and leaves behind only a token bit of attention to keep the system going. The energy is not sufficient in most cases for you to perceive them on the ordinary conscious thinking level unless you have developed subtle perception through techniques such as the Ocean Awareness Meditation.
- **Beliefs can get “lost”.** If you put your hand in front of your face, you can see it clearly. If you put your hand behind your back, you may know it is there, but you can not see it. Sometimes we misplace beliefs in the same way we misplace keys, file folders, and other items when we forget where we put them or unintentionally bury them under other items. You know that you have an invisible belief when an experience keeps coming up, but you do not know why it is there or how to modify or delete it. You can not do anything to eradicate it other than try to temporarily ignore it, because you do not know the belief that attracts the experience. Who listens to his heart beat all day? Who knows why or how the heart beats? A person who habitually arrives late for appointments may subconsciously believe that by doing so people will pay more attention to him. However, he has forgotten that he has this belief and thinks that he is always late because he is too busy, or situations keep coming up in his life that prevent him from arriving punctually. He is annoyed by the habit, and so are his coworkers and friends, but he can not seem to change the behavior. He will have lots of evidence for how busy he is (excuses) and for all the things that come up (more excuses), but will fail to recall that at some point he noticed someone important who got a lot of attention by being late to engagements on a regular basis. Craving more attention, he decided to take up that style of behavior. Others may clearly see his ruse and suggest that possibility to him. Very likely he will vigorously deny it when you tell him and may even get angry. He will feel quite honest in his answer, because he has accumulated other beliefs that keep

the belief that makes him late a big secret from himself.

- To find an invisible belief you have to keep probing about for various beliefs and the experiences they would produce until you find the one that feels right and produces the experience that is giving you trouble. If you keep poking about patiently and honestly, you will find it. Another approach is to develop your powers of subtle perception through deep meditation so that you can sense the faint mental impulses that run the program in the background of consciousness.
- **The model that you define your beliefs, and then your beliefs govern your experiences, is of course also a belief system.** You can always take a different viewpoint and believe that beliefs can not radically affect your experiences or that many of your experiences are due to situations in the world that you have little influence over, but that nevertheless can affect you in major ways. How does that feel? I do not know about you, but such viewpoints feel very disempowering to me. And that disempowerment basically derives from your own belief that you have no power or only very little power over events in the world. Which belief system do you prefer? Would you rather be responsible for your own destiny, or would you rather delegate that responsibility to someone else and then pretend that you are not responsible for the results?
- **Prescribed sets of beliefs**, such as religious tenets, political platforms, or cultural traditions generally are attempts to define group consciousness and mold society to a particular belief system. It is fine to copy someone else's belief system into your personal world. Just make sure that it honestly fits your preferences. In the end each person decides what to believe and what to experience. This ensures a sense of complete personal responsibility. Each person makes his own bed and then lies in it regardless of what the social beliefs are.
- **The Wall Exercise**  
Find a sturdy wall and press against it as hard as you can with the palm of your hand. How does that feel? Do you feel the wall pressing against hard your palm? Now ease up a bit on the effort you use. Does the wall press less hard against your palm? Ease up some more. Do you notice the wall presses less and less against your palm? Now just rest your palm lightly against the wall. Does the wall just lightly touch your hand? Finally, draw your hand back slightly from the wall, but still hold it by the wall. Is the wall still there and your hand also? Do you feel any pressure from the wall on your hand? The purpose

of this exercise is to demonstrate that any pressure we feel in life does not come from objects and events. Rather it comes from our own decisions. You can coexist with the wall and generate no pressure between you and the wall, or you can smash your fist against the wall, feel pain, and see blood. It is up to you.

- **Learn how to distinguish what you truly believe** as opposed to what you believe you ought to believe (indoctrination) or simply say that you believe to impress others (pretense). This fosters greater honesty and integrity. Heightened perception also leads to better appreciation of a situation and creative insights into how best to interact in a situation.
- Belief Management Programs deserve a high priority in our educational curriculum. They hold promise as some of the best tools for developing creative, responsible citizens who will carry forward the building of great civilizations on this planet that can grow, flourish, and expand throughout the universe.
- **Attention is dynamic in an effortless way and tends to flow automatically.** Understanding this flow is the key to all attention management and all success in life. The flow is a cycle that moves through four general phases. The first phase is PREFERENCE. Attention is a directed flow of awareness. It flows in the direction of whatever preference you direct it toward and that becomes your reality in the moment. However, regardless of whatever preference you direct your attention toward the attention will soon begin to SHIFT. The shift happens because once you focus attention on something, you begin to relax. Directing attention at a preference takes energy and defines limitations to your reality. Trying to hold attention on something requires continuous expenditure of energy to hold the focus and soon exhausts the body's physical supply of energy. Relaxation sets in and brings loss of focus. The loss of focus means that the attention expands to include other possibilities. That expanding shift can bring up a creative development for your preference, a wandering away from your preference to something else, or an encounter with an obstacle or problem regarding your preference. In any case the attention will shift automatically, and you can not stop it, because in that moment that is your reality and you do not even know it is happening. Attempts to prevent the shift will only add a feeling of stress to the shift when it inevitably occurs. The third phase is DISCOVERY. You awaken to the shift that has occurred. You may have a reaction that is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral with regard to what you discover from the shift. In any case, the discovery is also automatic, because your attention again relaxes

in its flow and expands out to a viewpoint that can distinguish the shift from the preference. The discovery phase automatically puts you into an expanded state of coexisting with a discovery, a shift, and an original preference within your awareness. This puts you in the fourth phase, which is total FREEDOM. Freedom is the most relaxed state of the four phases and also contains an unlimited host of possibilities that are optional realities you may or may not be aware of consciously. In that state of total freedom you may exercise your will and choose where you would prefer to direct your attention next. This freedom phase is the only point in the flow of attention that you have any control over. It is also your primal state of complete freedom and the essence of every moment of existence. It is the quintessential NOW that underlies every preference, shift, or discovery that you may bring about in your life by the choices you make with your will or your default habits. When you direct the flow of attention from freedom to preference, you expend energy to define your awareness with limitations. From that point on attention naturally relaxes back toward its innate state of undefined freedom. The intensity of focus is still strong as it relaxes from your preference phase during the shift, but then it continues to relax into the discovery phase, and relaxes most in the freedom phase. Here is a simple diagram of the flow of attention.



- A person may not wish to stay in the state of freedom because of some preference that is desired. The direction attention takes during the shift is usually dominated by the habitual attention flows a person has going on in the background of consciousness. Many people feel a recurrent urge to leave freedom so they can continue their habitual attention flows. They live on automatic. As a person becomes more used to relaxing in the state of freedom, the habitual attention flows dissolve and no longer generate urgent desires to have certain preferred experiences. Then the shift phase comes to be dominated by entertaining and creative new viewpoints that enhance a person's preferences. The discovery phase comes to be dominated by a sense of pleasant surprise. Eventually the attention relaxes to the point that it takes equal pleasure in any possibility and no longer has any personal preferences. At that point the attention may simply dissolve into the Ocean of Awareness and appear to flow around endlessly within itself with no personal identity preferences involved. Another possibility is that



the individual may direct attention to a particular flow within the ocean of awareness and enjoy exploring and evolving that flow in that sector of the ocean, or even throughout the whole ocean of awareness. That is what I described earlier as a Mission. Such a Mission can continue to evolve with the flow of the ocean of awareness itself.

- **Meditation is a technique for refining the subtlety of the attention flow so that it becomes more efficient.** During meditation a person directs attention at a particular thought with **no concern for the content of the thought**, but interested only in the energy of the thought. Thus meditation is a meaningless process. Each thought has a shape, primarily in sound, as a word. The procedure is to direct the attention onto the thought with no effort or special intention and then to simply go back to the thought each time the discovery is that the thought is over or has shifted to some other thought. In this way the attention gradually relaxes and the thinking of the thought takes less and less energy. The thought becomes fainter and less well defined. Eventually the thought reaches the level of least energy consumption and the attention shifts beyond the thought into a perfectly relaxed condition. From the state of No-Thought (deepest relaxation) habitual attention flow automatically brings consciousness back into the shift phase via the excitation of a default preference, and from there on to the discovery phase. The meditator then deliberately directs attention back to the faintest level of the thought selected for that meditation. Regular meditation practice reduces stress, relaxes mind and body, increases subtle perception, and expands the sense of freedom. Eventually the default attention flows all dissolve allowing a person to live completely deliberately directing attention to preferences with total experience of their reality or just go with the uninhibited flow of awareness within itself and enjoy completely whatever comes up.
- During activity a person directs the flow of attention at preferred goals, and thus the “content” (i.e. meaning and importance) is involved as well as the “energy” (i.e. the intensity with which the goal actualizes as an experience.). The point in this case is to visualize a goal as clearly as possible. As perception skills increase less and less energy is required to realize a goal. The flow of attention is exactly the same, except that a person directs attention deliberately at the chosen goal preference each time the discovery phase reveals the goal has not been realized to full satisfaction. Often a goal will evolve as a person moves around the cycle, and may evolve into something far beyond the original expectation. This possibility of progress is entirely due to the natural tendency

of the attention to relax from any boundaries placed on it and to shift into a more expanded viewpoint and ultimately the most relaxed state of total freedom.

● **Some Benefits Derived from Developing Belief Management Skills**

Shift away from facing the question of what **should** I believe,  
Shift toward the question of what I personally would **LIKE** to believe,  
Ability to manifest preferred beliefs into preferred realities,  
Relief from contradictory beliefs,  
Increasingly balanced perspective,  
Increase of tolerance and compassion,  
Reduction of pretense,  
Relief from indoctrination stress,  
Alignment between beliefs and experiences,  
Enhanced will power and decision-making abilities,  
Greater achievement,  
Greater happiness,  
Greater creativity,  
Greater sense of self-confidence,  
Greater sense of personal independence,  
Increased sense of personal responsibility,  
Increased integrity and honesty,  
Ability to manage ambitious Projects such as those outlined in this Plan for a Planet plus many more that you may conceive.

Educational psychologist Harry Palmer invites you to ask three interesting “questions of enlightenment” that can help get you started on your explorations. For more details you can go hear him give an amusing talk on the subject. Go to the following webpage and then select “Avatar-Audio” from the menu. <http://avatarepcmedia.com/avatar-audio.html>.

Here are the three questions:

1. Who am I?
2. What is happening?
3. Why am I here?

In the 1960's I met a Zen master who invited me to explore a bit with meditation. The first assignment he gave me was to spend a whole week with attention on

Question #1 from the above list. Forty years later I am still exploring that question, although I also now include the other two questions in the adventure.

If you would like another way to begin an inquiry into what causes problems in your life and how to resolve them, go to [www.thework.com](http://www.thework.com) and play with Byron Katie's four questions and turn it around game.

The best way I know to make progress in resolving issues in your life or career is to drop the assumptions, settle down, ask some key questions, and explore. Follow these suggestions or find your own path. Then create your own answers.