

# Core Beliefs Inventory

(from *Prisoners of Belief* by Matthew McKay, Ph.D. and Patrick Fanning)

After each of the 100 statements that follow, circle T or F according to whether you think the statement is mostly true or mostly false. In cases where it's a close decision, go with your first impulse. It is important to complete every item, circling the T or the F (but not both), in order to get an accurate score at the end. But this is not a test – there are no right or wrong answers, or better and worse ways to complete the inventory.

- 1 T F I am worthy of love and respect
- 2 T F My world is a pretty safe place
- 3 T F I perform many tasks well
- 4 T F I am in control of my life
- 5 T F I feel loved and cared for
- 6 T F I can rely upon myself
- 7 T F The world is neither fair nor unfair
- 8 T F I feel a strong sense of belonging in my family and community
- 9 T F Most people can be trusted
- 10 T F I set reasonable standards for myself
- 11 T F I often feel flawed or defective
- 12 T F Life is dangerous – a medical, natural, or financial disaster could strike at any time
- 13 T F I am basically incompetent
- 14 T F I have very little control over my life
- 15 T F I've never felt really cared for by my family
- 16 T F Others can care for me better than I can care for myself
- 17 T F I get upset when I don't get what I want – I hate to take no for an answer
- 18 T F I frequently feel left out of groups
- 19 T F Many people would like to hurt me or take advantage of me
- 20 T F Very little of what I do satisfies me – I usually think I could do better
- 21 T F I feel OK about myself
- 22 T F I can protect myself from most dangers
- 23 T F Doing some things comes easy for me
- 24 T F I have the power I need to solve most of my problems
- 25 T F I have at least one satisfying intimate relationship
- 26 T F It's OK to disagree with others
- 27 T F I accept it when I don't get what I want

- 28 T F I fit in well with my circle of friends
- 29 T F I rarely need to protect or guard myself with other people
- 30 T F I can forgive myself for failure
- 31 T F Nobody I desire would desire me if they really got to know me
- 32 T F I worry about getting sick or hurt
- 33 T F When I trust my own judgment, I make wrong decisions
- 34 T F Events just bowl me over sometimes
- 35 T F My relationships are shallow – if I disappeared tomorrow, no one would notice
- 36 T F I find myself going along with others' plans
- 37 T F There are certain things I simply must have to be happy
- 38 T F I feel like an outsider
- 39 T F Most people think only of themselves
- 40 T F I'm a perfectionist; I must be the best at whatever I do
- 41 T F I have legitimate needs I deserve to fill
- 42 T F I am willing to take risks
- 43 T F I am a competent person, as capable as most people
- 44 T F My impulses don't control me
- 45 T F I feel nurtured in my family
- 46 T F I don't need the approval of others for everything I do
- 47 T F Things tend to work out, even in the end
- 48 T F People usually accept me as I am
- 49 T F I seldom feel taken advantage of
- 50 T F I set achievable goals for myself
- 51 T F I'm dull and boring and can't make interesting conversation
- 52 T F If I'm not careful with my money, I might end up with nothing
- 53 T F I tend to avoid new challenges
- 54 T F I fear I'll give in to overwhelming crying, anger, or sexual impulses
- 55 T F I'm afraid of being abandoned – that a loved one will die or reject me
- 56 T F I don't function well on my own
- 57 T F I feel I shouldn't have to accept some of the limitations placed on ordinary people
- 58 T F People don't usually include me in what they're doing
- 59 T F Most people can't be trusted
- 60 T F Failure is very upsetting to me
- 61 T F I count for something in the world
- 62 T F I can take care of myself and my loved ones

- 63 T F I can learn new skills if I try
- 64 T F I can usually control my feelings
- 65 T F I can get the care and attention I need
- 66 T F I like to spend time by myself
- 67 T F Most of the time I feel fairly treated
- 68 T F My hopes and dreams are much like everyone else's
- 69 T F I give people the benefit of the doubt
- 70 T F I'm not perfect and that's OK
- 71 T F I'm unattractive
- 72 T F I choose my old, familiar ways of doing things over risking the unexpected
- 73 T F I don't perform well under stress
- 74 T F I'm powerless to change many of the situations I'm in
- 75 T F There's no one I can count on for support and advice
- 76 T F I try hard to please others and I put their needs before my own
- 77 T F I tend to expect the worst
- 78 T F Sometimes I feel like an alien, very different from everybody else
- 79 T F I must be on my guard against others' lies and hostile remarks
- 80 T F I push myself so hard that I harm my relationships, my health, or my happiness
- 81 T F People I like and respect often like and respect me
- 82 T F I don't worry much about health or money
- 83 T F Most of my decisions are sound
- 84 T F I can take charge when I need to
- 85 T F I can depend on my friends for advice and emotional support
- 86 T F I think for myself, I can stand up for my ideas
- 87 T F I am treated fairly most of the time
- 88 T F I could change jobs or join a club and soon fit in
- 89 T F I'd rather be too gullible than too suspicious
- 90 T F It's OK to make mistakes
- 91 T F I don't deserve much attention or respect
- 92 T F I feel uneasy when I go very far from home alone
- 93 T F I mess up everything I attempt
- 94 T F I'm often a victim of circumstances
- 95 T F I have no one who hugs me, shares secrets with me, or really cares what happens to me
- 96 T F I have trouble making my own wants and needs known

- 97 T F Although my life is objectively OK, I have a lot of trouble accepting some parts that aren't the way I'd like them to be
- 98 T F I don't feel I belong where I am
- 99 T F Most people will break their promises and lie
- 100 T F I have very clear, black-and-white rules for myself

## Scoring

This inventory assesses your core beliefs about the ten topics listed below. These topics are important areas of everyone's life, about which everyone has some sort of belief whether it's conscious or not.

To score your answers follow these instructions carefully:

### 1. Value

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 1, 21, 41, 61, 81. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 11, 31, 51, 71, 91. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am worthy*". The higher your score, the more valuable you believe you are as a person.

### 2. Security

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 2, 22, 42, 62, 82. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 12, 32, 52, 72, 92. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am safe*". The higher your score, the more safe you feel.

### 3. Performance

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 3, 23, 43, 63, 83. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 13, 33, 53, 73, 93. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am competent*". The higher your score, the more competent you feel.

### 4. Control

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 4, 24, 44, 64, 84. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 14, 34, 54, 74, 94. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am powerful*". The higher your score, the more you feel in control of your life.

**5. Love**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 5, 25, 45, 5, 85. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 15, 35, 55, 75, 95. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am loved*". The higher your score, the more you feel nurtured.

**6. Autonomy**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 6, 26, 46, 66, 86. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 16, 36, 56, 76, 96. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am autonomous*". The higher your score, the more independent you feel.

**7. Justice**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 7, 27, 47, 67, 87. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 17, 37, 57, 77, 97. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I am treated justly*". The higher your score, the more likely you are to accept what you get in life as fair or reasonable.

**8. Belonging**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 8, 28, 48, 68, 88. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 18, 38, 58, 78, 98. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*I belong*". The higher your score, the more you feel secure and connected to family, friends, acquaintances and humanity in general.

**9. Others**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 9, 29, 49, 69, 89. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 19, 39, 59, 79, 99. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "*People are good*". The higher your score, the more likely you are to trust others and to expect them to behave positively towards you.

**10. Standards**

\_\_\_\_\_ points

Look at your answers for items 10, 30, 50, 70, 90. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 20, 40, 60, 80, 100. For each F circled, give yourself one point.

Record your total points in the space above

On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*My standards are reasonable and flexible*”. The higher your score, the more likely you are to judge your own and others’ actions compassionately.

To get a quick overview of your scores you can fill in the bar chart below. Colour in each bar starting at the bottom and extending up to your score for that category.

|       |          |             |         |      |          |         |           |        |           |
|-------|----------|-------------|---------|------|----------|---------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| 1     | 1        | 1           | 1       | 1    | 1        | 1       | 1         | 1      | 1         |
| 2     | 2        | 2           | 2       | 2    | 2        | 2       | 2         | 2      | 2         |
| 3     | 3        | 3           | 3       | 3    | 3        | 3       | 3         | 3      | 3         |
| 4     | 4        | 4           | 4       | 4    | 4        | 4       | 4         | 4      | 4         |
| 5     | 5        | 5           | 5       | 5    | 5        | 5       | 5         | 5      | 5         |
| 6     | 6        | 6           | 6       | 6    | 6        | 6       | 6         | 6      | 6         |
| 7     | 7        | 7           | 7       | 7    | 7        | 7       | 7         | 7      | 7         |
| 8     | 8        | 8           | 8       | 8    | 8        | 8       | 8         | 8      | 8         |
| 9     | 9        | 9           | 9       | 9    | 9        | 9       | 9         | 9      | 9         |
| 10    | 10       | 10          | 10      | 10   | 10       | 10      | 10        | 10     | 10        |
|       |          |             |         |      |          |         |           |        |           |
| [1]   | [2]      | [3]         | [4]     | [5]  | [6]      | [7]     | [8]       | [9]    | [10]      |
| Value | Security | Performance | Control | Love | Autonomy | Justice | Belonging | Others | Standards |

### Interpreting your scores

It is tempting to visualise the bars on this chart as the bars of a prison. The higher the bars, the more confined and restricted by your beliefs you may feel. The lower the bars, the more freedom and choices you may have in life.

But the Core Belief Inventory is just a guideline. It is designed to help you start to identify your core beliefs, not to pass judgment on them or on yourself. The inventory reveals how you see yourself in the world, based on your experiences. The result isn’t good or bad.

People who score high in agreement with the 10 basic belief statements may tend to have a greater sense of well-being than those who score low. But that isn’t the point. What matters is getting an honest sense of what you have come to believe about yourself.

Take this inventory with several grains of salt. Use it to find out where you stand on these core questions, but do not beat yourself up about your results. You believe what you believe. It is literally true for you at this moment and you can’t just decide to believe something else because it would give you a “better” score.

Likewise, don’t get stuck in the idea that there are exactly ten possible core beliefs. Ten is just a convenient number. It makes the inventory work neatly. But you could make a strong case for love and belonging being such similar issues that they are part of the same belief. Or you could say that safety and the good or evil nature of others are part of the same belief about how vulnerable you are. And we have undoubtedly left out some belief that is very important to you.