Living the life of your dreams: The ICE treatment.

You know how there’s some baby names which have been totally ruined for you by that one person you just can’t stand?

This might sound trivial, but it’s a good example of something called the experiences-values cycle. We go through life, encounter various situations and form opinions which drive future actions, and so on. This is illustrated below:

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Sometimes our beliefs – even those deep-rooted ones – are based on a desire to affirm pre-existing experiences. You have a first experience, which forms values, which lead to action, which creates experiences and so on. The problem is that by the time we reach that second ‘experiences’, we already have the values from our first experience. We come into the experience with a pre-existing notion of what this means, and then seek to confirm it.

In short: the vast majority of our opinions would likely be different if we had happened to have had different experiences in life. That’s a pretty uncomfortable truth.

But there is a silver lining. A big, beautiful silver lining. Whilst this forces us to examine some of the beliefs that we *do* desire to be true, it also gives us permission to *seriously challenge* some of our less-cuddly beliefs. The big, ugly *self-limiting beliefs* that we all have.

Before we look at our self-limiting beliefs, it’s important to note at this stage that it is impossible to challenge yourself. It would be a really good idea to draft in a third party to talk this stuff through with. Now, as a qualified business coach myself I would be inclined to recommend somebody qualified. However, a family member or partner will do just fine.

Right then, time to tackle these self-limiting beliefs. First let’s look at the theory, then, in a minute, we’ll put it into practice.

Step one: **Identify** your self-limiting beliefs. Start by thinking about your frustrated objectives. What is blocking achieving those objectives? Are they external? Or are they internal i.e. coming from you? Is it your belief, or is it a universal truth? Where is the evidence for this belief (accepting that it *might* be a logical and rational truth)?

Step two: **Challenge** these beliefs. Remember: our beliefs are a product of our experiences. It *could* be that the reason you believe you can’t achieve something is because someone or something has made you think that. Had this experience not happened to you (which it did by *pure chance*), you wouldn’t hold this self-limiting belief.

Step three: **Experience** your new reality. A great place to start is by simply *pretending to believe what you want to believe.* Performactions that fit the new belief and disprove the old belief (thereby showing the old belief was not a universal truth). Then consider some existing behaviours that enforce the old belief and replace them with a new behaviour that is aligned with the new belief.

Slowly but surely, this mindset should produce more positive experiences.

Now, it’s time to put this into practice.

Exercise: time to stick the kettle on.

It’s nitty-gritty time. If you haven’t already, now would be *a really, really* good time to draft in that third party we talked about. You are going to complete the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Belief | How do you know this to be correct? | Is it a belief or the truth? | If belief, what would be the replacement belief? | What is the outcome? |
|  |  |  |  |  |
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Using the ICE treatment outlined above, and consulting with your trusted third-party, it’s time to fill in these beliefs and work left to right.

One output of this process is to begin coming up with new options. Challenge your thinking should leave space for new opportunities and new ideas.