BELIEFS THAT HELP RELATIONSHIPS

Often, problems that surface in relationships are indications of underlying self-destructive beliefs. If you have difficulty making changes that could help your marriage, it may be because of such ideas. These thoughts are not actually caused by your partner, but were instilled in you from early life experiences. To discover thoughts you have that cause relationship glitches, ask yourself:¹

- When my partner's behavior disturbs me, what does that mean about me?
- How do my partner's upsetting actions make me feel about myself?
- When did I first have this disturbing thought(s) about myself?

Directions: Mark any of the thoughts in the table below that come to you during relationship problems. Then, mark any of the beliefs you would like to have when your partner upsets you.	
Change Thoughts That Hurt into .	Beliefs That Help Relationships
 I have trouble asking my partner for help or expressing myself because I think: I have to fix everything and keep others happy, or I'm a failure. I'm not important. I cannot get my needs met. I can't show emotions or express feelings. 	I can ask for help or express myself when I believe: I can understand others without having to fix them or keep them happy. I am important. I can get my needs met. I can show emotions, express my feelings, etc.
 2. I have trouble handling my partner when he or she is upset because I think: I'm trapped, helpless, or powerless. I have to get my way or I lose. I'm responsible for others' distress. 	I can handle my partner's distress when I think: I have options and choices; I can do something. I can do things to reach a satisfying solution. I decide when I contribute to others' distress.
 3. I have trouble when my partner wants distance or a separation because I think: I'm alone or empty. No one is there for me. I can't survive if I'm "abandoned." There is only one right person for me. 	I can handle my partner's desire for distance or a separation when I believe: I can find many sources of support. I can enjoy myself without my partner. I can love more than one person in a lifetime.
 4. I have trouble with jealousy and control because I think: I'm stupid or foolish if I'm deceived. I can't trust anyone. Other: 	I do not have difficulty with jealousy when I believe: Deception is caused by my partner's dishonesty. I can take appropriate action when I'm deceived. I can find people to trust.

Directions: Mark any of the thoughts in the table below that some to you during relationship problems. Then

When your relationship is going well, the above desired beliefs may seem completely true. It will be harder to maintain them during conflicts of interest or when your needs are not being met. Affirming new thought patterns regularly will help you adopt positive beliefs that can overcome your resistance to change and put you and your partner on the fast track to relationship success.

¹ See EMDR: The Breakthrough Therapy by Francine Shapiro (Basic Books, 1997) and A Guide to Rational Living by Ellis (Wilshire Books, 1997) for further ideas on how thoughts affect emotions.