

Self-Defeating Belief Scale*

Instructions. After each of the 35 attitudes on the Self-Defeating Belief Scale, put a check in the column that represents how you think and feel *most of the time*. Be sure to answer all 35 items.

Choose only one answer for each attitude. We are all different, and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Decide whether a given attitude is typical of how you look at things and react most of the time.

Here’s an example:

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
1. Criticism is usually very upsetting to me.				√	

You can see that the woman who answered this question put a check in the “Agree Slightly” column because she had a tendency to get upset when she was criticized. As you take the test, add your answers for every group of five questions. Spaces are provided for you to do this.

After you complete the test, you will generate a profile of your personal attitudes and beliefs. This will reveal areas of psychological strength and vulnerability which you can discuss with your therapist.

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This test was adapted from the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale developed by Dr. Arlene Weissman, a clinical psychologist. The scale items and scoring system have all been changed to make the test easier to use and score. The test was first published in *Ten Days to Self-Esteem* by David Burns MD (New York: Quill, 1993)

Self-Defeating Beliefs Scale*

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Put a check (✓) in front of the statement that agrees with your level of belief.

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
1. Criticism is usually very upsetting to me.					
2. If someone disapproves of me. I feel as if I am not very worthwhile.					
3. I need other people's approval to feel happy and worthwhile.					
4. I often get defensive when someone criticizes me.					
5. My self-esteem depends greatly on what others think of me.					

Total Scores on Items #1 - #5 →

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
6. I cannot feel happy and fulfilled without being loved by another person.					
7. If I am not loved, I am bound to be unhappy.					
8. If someone rejected me, I would feel as if there was something wrong with me.					
9. I must be loved to feel like a worthwhile human being.					
10. Being alone and unloved is bound to lead to unhappiness.					

Total Scores on Items #6 - #10 →

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
11. I sometimes feel upset because I have not been especially successful in life.					
12. People with outstanding careers, social status, wealth, or fame are bound to be happier than people who are not especially successful.					
13. People who achieve a great deal are more worthwhile than those who do not.					
14. I sometimes feel inferior to people who are more intelligent and successful than I am					
15. My self-esteem depends greatly on how productive and successful I am.					

Total Scores on Items #11 - #15 → _____

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
16. People will think less of me if I make a mistake.					
17. I feel less worthwhile when I fail.					
18. People would look down on me if they found out about all the mistakes I've made.					
19. I usually get very upset if I make a mistake.					
20. I feel like I should try to be perfect.					

Total Scores on Items #16 - #20 →

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
21. I often get upset when people do not meet my expectations.					
22. I often feel entitled to better treatment from others.					
23. Other people are usually to blame for the problems in my relationships with them.					
24. I often get frustrated or annoyed with people.					
25. I feel like I deserve better treatment from other people.					

Total Scores on Items #21 - #25 →

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
26. I often feel guilty if someone is annoyed with me.					
27. I get self-critical if I'm not getting along well with a friend or family member.					
28. I usually blame myself for the problems in my relationships with other people.					
29. If someone is upset with me, I usually feel as if it's my fault.					
30. I often get self-critical if I am not able to please everybody.					

Total Scores on Items #26 - #30 →

	Disagree Strongly (0)	Disagree Slightly (1)	Neutral (2)	Agree Slightly (3)	Agree Strongly (4)
31. I feel pessimistic that things could ever change for the better.					
32. It would be extremely difficult or impossible to solve the problems in my life.					
33. I believe that my bad moods result from factors beyond my control.					
34. I don't believe I will ever feel truly happy or worthwhile.					
35. There's very little anyone could do to help me solve my problems.					

Total Scores on Items #30 - #35 → _____

Scoring the Self-Defeating Beliefs Scale

When you took the test you added up your scores for each group of five questions. Transfer those scores onto the following chart. You can review these scores with your therapist at the next session.

Belief	Items that test this belief	Total Score for this belief
Approval Addiction	1-5	
Love Addiction	6-10	
Achievement Addiction	11-15	
Perfectionism	16-20	
Entitlement	21-25	
Self-Blame	26-30	
Hopelessness/ Helplessness	31-35	

Interpreting Your Scores

Low scores (between 0-10) represent areas of psychological strength. The lower the score, the better. High scores (between 11-20) represent areas of possible emotional vulnerability. The higher the score, the greater the vulnerability. These are areas where you may want to do some work. You should definitely discuss your scores with your therapist at the next session.

For example, suppose you have a high score on the Achievement Addiction and you believe that you must be a success in life to be worthwhile. If you have this belief, you may feel motivated and work extremely hard, and when you are successful, you feel happy and secure. These are advantages. On the other hand, when you experience a set-back in your career or you fail to achieve a personal goal you may have a tendency to feel worthless and depressed. Then you will have two problems for the price of one!

APPROVAL ADDICTION

A low score between zero and ten indicates you are independent with a healthy sense of your own worth even when confronted with criticism and disapproval.

A high score between eleven and twenty indicate you are excessively dependent because you evaluate yourself through other people's eyes. If someone insults you or puts you down, you automatically tend to look down on yourself.

Since your emotional well-being is exquisitely sensitive to what you imagine people think of you, you can be easily manipulated, and you are vulnerable to anxiety and depression when others criticize you or are angry with you.

LOVE ADDICTION

A low score between zero and ten indicates you see love as desirable, but you have a wide range of other interests you also find gratifying and fulfilling. Hence, love is not a requirement for your happiness or self-esteem.

People are likely to find you attractive because you radiate a healthy sense of self-love and are interested in many aspects of living.

A high score between 11 and 20 indicates you are a “love junkie”. You see love as a “need” without which you cannot survive, much less be happy. The closer your score is to twenty, the more dependent on love you are. You tend to adopt inferior, put-down roles in relationships with people you care about for fear of alienating them. They lose respect for you and consider you a burden because of your attitude that without their love your world collapse.

As you sense that people drift away from you, you become gripped by a painful, terrifying withdrawal syndrome. You may even resort to coercive, manipulative behaviour to get your “stuff”. Ironically, your needy, greedy love addiction drives many people away, thus intensifying your loneliness.

ACHIEVEMENT ADDICTION

A high score between 11 and 20 indicates you are a workaholic. You have a constricted sense of your own humanity, and you see yourself as a commodity in the marketplace. The higher your score, the more your sense of self-worth and your capacity for joy are dependent on your productivity. If you go on vacation, if your business slumps, if you retire or become ill and inactive, you will be in danger of an emotional crash.

A low score between zero and ten, in contrast, indicates that you enjoy creativity and productivity, but do not see them as an exclusive or necessary road to self-esteem and satisfaction

PERFECTIONSIM

A high score between eleven and twenty indicates that you demand perfection in yourself – *mistakes are taboo, failure is worse than death, and even negative emotions are a disaster*. You’re supposed to look, feel, think, and behave superbly at all times. Although you drive yourself at an intense pace, your satisfactions are meagre. Once you do achieve a goal, another more distant goal instantly replaces it, so you never experience the reward of getting to the top to the mountain. Your life becomes a joyless, tedious treadmill. You are living with unrealistic, impossible personal standards, and you need to re-evaluate them. Your problem does not lie in your performance, but in the yard stick

you use to measure it. If you bring your expectations in line with reality, you will be regularly pleased and rewarded instead of frustrated.

A low score suggests you have the capacity to set meaningful, flexible, appropriate standards. You get great satisfaction from processes and experiences, and you are not exclusively fixated on outcomes. You don't have to be outstanding at everything, and you don't always have to "try your best." You don't fear mistakes, but you see them as golden opportunities to learn and to endorse your humanity. Paradoxically, you are likely to be much more productive than your perfectionistic associates because you do not become compulsively preoccupied with detail and correctness. Your life is like a flowing river or a geyser compared with your rigid perfectionist friends who appear more like icy glaciers.

ENTITLEMENT

A high score between eleven and twenty indicates that you feel "entitled" to things – success, love, happiness, etc. You expect and demand that your wants be met by other people and by the universe at large because of your inherent goodness or hard work. When this does not happen – as is often the case - you are locked into one of two reactions - either you feel depressed and inadequate or you become irate. Thus, you consume enormous amounts of energy being frustrated, sad, and mad. Much of the time you see life as a sour, rotten experience. You complain loudly and often, but you do little to solve problems. After all, you're entitled to have them solved, so why should you have to put out any effort? As a result of your bitter, demanding attitudes, you invariably get far less of what you want from life.

A low score between zero and ten suggests you don't feel automatically entitled to things, so you negotiate for what you want and often get it. Because of your awareness that other people are unique and different, you realize there is no inherent reason why things should always go your way. You experience a negative outcome as a disappointment but not a tragedy because you are a percentage player, and you don't expect perfect reciprocity or "justice" at all times. You are patient and persistent, and you have a high frustration tolerance. As a result, you often end up ahead of the pack.

SELF-BLAME

This is your tendency to see yourself as the center of your personal universe and to hold yourself responsible for much of what goes on around you.

A high score between eleven and twenty indicates you often blame yourself inappropriately for the negative actions and attitudes of others who are not really under your control. Consequently, you are plagued by guilt and self-condemnation. Paradoxically, the attitude that you should be omnipotent and all-powerful cripples you and leaves you anxious and ineffectual.

A low score, in contrast, indicates you know the joy that comes from accepting that you are not the centre of the universe. Since you are not in control of others, you are not ultimately responsible for them but only for yourself. This attitude does not isolate you from others. Quite the opposite is true. You relate to people effectively as a friendly collaborator, and you are not threatened when they disagree with your ideas or fail to follow your advice. Because your attitude gives people a sense of freedom and dignity you paradoxically become a human magnet. Others often want to be close to you because you have relinquished any attempt to control them. People frequently listen to and respect your ideas because you do not polarize them with an angry insistence that they must agree with you. As you give up your drive for power, people repay you by making you a person of influence. Because you don't try to dominate people, they admire, love, and respect you.

HOPELESSNESS/HELPLESSNESS

When you are depressed, you get so frozen in the pain of the present moment that you forget entirely that you ever felt better in the past and find it inconceivable that you might feel more positive in the future. Therefore, any activity will seem pointless because you are absolutely certain your lack of motivations and sense of oppression are unending and irreversible. From this perspective, the suggestion that you do something to 'help yourself' might sound as ludicrous and insensitive as telling a dying man to cheer up.

When you feel helpless, you can't possibly do anything that will make yourself feel better because you are convinced that your moods are caused by factors beyond your control such as fate, hormone cycles, dietary factors, luck and other people's evaluations of you.

This refers to your ability to find happiness within yourself. A low score between zero and ten indicates that all your moods are ultimately the children of your thoughts and attitudes. You assume responsibility for your feelings because you recognize they are ultimately created by you. This sounds as if you might be lonely and isolated because you realize that all meaning and feelings are created only in your head. Paradoxically, however, this vision of autonomy frees you from the petty confines of your mind and delivers the world to you with a full measure of all the satisfaction, mystery and excitement that it can offer.

A high score between eleven and twenty suggest you are still trapped in the belief that your potential for joy and self-esteem come from the outside. This puts you at a great disadvantage because everything outside is ultimately beyond your control. Your moods end up the victim of external factors. Do you want this? If not, you can eventually free yourself from this attitude as surely as a snake sheds its skin, but you will have to work at it with the various methods outlined in the book, *Feeling Good: the New Mood Therapy* by David Burns MD or Dr. Burns' *Feeling Good: the Handbook*. If it seems to be a relationship problem, use Dr. Burns' *Feeling Good Together*. When it's finally your turn to experience the transformation to hope and personal responsibility, you will be amazed – even awestruck – or pleased – or delightfully overwhelmed. It's worth a major personal commitment. END

