

CHAPTER 3

WHO OWNS YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM?



“Breaking free from old beliefs is the key to unlocking your full potential to live the life you desire.” ~ Brenda Hukel

I was sitting behind a closed door working on a highly confidential project when Olivia stormed into my office without knocking.

I looked up from my desk, shaking my head and thinking, “And so the day begins.”

“Well, then, please come on in,” I said to her. “I guess you didn’t notice my door was closed? There was a reason for that.”

“Oh, um . . . yeah, sorry. I need to talk to you. I want to file a complaint against my boss, Royce.”

Exasperated, I said, “Olivia, what are you talking about? What type of complaint?”

“For being treated differently than my coworkers. Retaliation. Oh, and harassment, too.”

“Sit down, please, and close the door. Again.” I looked into her eyes, contemplating how I wanted to play this, and thought, “I’m going to call her bluff.”

“What on earth is going on with you?” I asked her. “I’ve known you for over ten years, and this little performance is way out of character—even for you, Olivia.”

“My boss is retaliating against me,” Olivia repeatedly defiantly.

“How?” I asked.

“He’s paying me back for taking unplanned time off to care for my brother. He’s mad that he had to change his vacation because of my emergency, and now he took a huge project away from Gina and gave it to me. He’s trying to set me up to fail. I have the heaviest workload in the department, and he said I have to fly to Colorado next week to meet with the clients.” She exhaled a long breath before continuing with her rant.

“Do you have paperwork or something I need to fill out so I can file a complaint, or should I just get an attorney?” Olivia asked breathlessly.

I ran my hands through my hair and looked up at her.

“Olivia,” I said stiffly. “Royce gave you that project because it’s a game-changer for our company’s success. He needs someone he can depend on with the knowledge and expertise to ensure the project is delivered on schedule and within budget. That’s why he chose you. Didn’t he tell you that he adjusted your workload and reassigned two of your large projects?”

“What’s wrong with Gina?” she asked. “Why can’t she finish it? He always liked her more than me. She always gets what she wants. We used to be friends until I stopped doing everything for her.”

“Gina resigned last week when you were out on leave.”

“Royce purposely scheduled the client meeting on Thursday so that you could have a long weekend in Colorado to visit your sisters. The company is paying for the added time to

thank you for taking on the project. He met with me yesterday, and I approved it. Did he tell you he reassigned two of your projects so that you can focus on this one?"

"Well, he didn't have a chance," Olivia said as she lowered her head.

"Why?"

"When I heard I was getting another project, especially Gina's, I stormed out of his office and came straight here," she admitted sheepishly.

"I'm going to ask you one more time, Olivia. What's going on with you?"

She pressed her hands to her face, took a long, deep breath, began to cry, and said, "Oh, God. I'm so embarrassed. Royce has been so kind and understanding since my brother was diagnosed with advanced ALS. Since I transferred to his department, he really has been flexible with my schedule. I can't believe I lost it on him."

She shook her head and pinched the bridge of her nose. "I guess I brought my anger and frustration into work this morning. I got home late last night from my brother's. The kids left the house in a complete mess before leaving for their dad's. There were dirty dishes in the sink and on the table. The front room looked like the Tasmanian devil had stopped by for a visit. The clothes I washed and folded last night were all over the floor, and wet towels were on the bathroom floor. I was so hungry and exhausted. I felt so disrespected—it felt like they did it on purpose. You know they're still mad at me about the divorce, right? I don't know what their father tells them. He's the one who had an affair, not me."

"I would have been upset, too, but are you upset with the kids or yourself? The divorce was over eleven years ago. Are you sure the kids are still mad at you about it? They were babies at the time."

“I know how long my marriage has been over, Brenda! It doesn’t make it any easier being a single mother. Please don’t assume that it’s my fault. He left us!”

“I’m not saying it’s your fault, and I’m not saying it’s easy to be a single mother. You’re expecting different behaviors from your children, who aren’t aware of your expectations. You’ve said so yourself that you don’t discipline them or give them chores because you don’t want them to hate you. Yet, you continue to come home to a messy house. There are never any consequences, boundaries, or rules for the kids. That’s unhealthy. You do everything for them,” I said gently.

Olivia sighed. “I don’t want to lose them, too, Brenda. I already lost my husband to that bimbo.”

“Teaching children responsibility, accountability, and respect are hallmarks of a strong, capable person. These are critical skills for anyone, regardless of age. You’re angry because you feel your life has been unfair and controlled by external events,” I said softly.

“It is. It has been!” Olivia said defensively.

“Hear me out for a second. You may not like what I’m about to say, but I’m asking you to set your ego aside because it just wants to prove me wrong and validate your beliefs about your life. Can you just hear me first?”

Olivia slumped back in the chair, folded her arms across her chest, and glared at me like a five-year-old whose lollipop was taken away for bad behavior.

“Okay,” I said. “I’ll take that as a yes. We all go through difficult times in our lives. When we continue to replay the same internal story in our head, it keeps us stuck as the victim. We remain the victim because we think our emotions and how we react validate the injustice

done to us. But that isn't true. If external events controlled how we felt about a situation like a divorce, everyone who got divorced would feel the same way. They don't. Our beliefs about a situation affect our emotions and how we react. This is why so many people never heal from trauma because their beliefs are so ingrained within them that they struggle with moving forward. Instead, they hold onto negative emotions like bitterness, anger, victimism, and self-judgment. In their mind, this permits them to prove they're right and everyone else is wrong. Situations don't cause emotions; our beliefs about the situation do," I said.

"What are you saying?" Olivia asked.

"Your unhappiness is caused by your negative beliefs about your life. You're so adamant about being right and staying the victim, especially about your divorce, that you've alienated everyone who challenges your opinion."

I paused to gauge her reaction. I knew this was hard feedback to receive, but it was also essential for her to hear. "Until you're able to change your beliefs and be open to other opinions that provide different perspectives, you'll continue to struggle," I explained.

"I don't need to hear anyone's opinion. I'm right," Olivia snapped.

"Are you?" I challenged.

She continued to glare at me. I wasn't sure if she was absorbing the richness of the conversation and my knowledge on the topic or if she wanted to reach over and slap me. My guess was the latter.

"Olivia, our need to be right begins during our childhood. Do you know why?" I asked her.

“Why?” Olivia said in an over-exasperated tone, not missing the opportunity to roll her eyes.

“What do you do when your kids receive an A+ on a test?”

“Like any mother, I make a big deal out of it and reward them. Sometimes, I make cookies, or we go out for ice cream. Every A+ gets an extra \$5 in their allowance,” Olivia said proudly.

“How do your kids feel when they get an A+ vs. an F?”

“That’s a stupid question. How do you think they feel?”

“Just answer the question, please.”

“They feel smart. They’re happy. They want everyone to know. They’re the center of attention.”

“Exactly. When a child gets an A+ on a test, they correlate the happy emotion they feel with being right. Because they answered all the questions correctly, they’re rewarded and receive validation for being smart. When we’re older, our feelings are associated with being right to recreate the happy emotions and validation we felt as kids. So when someone’s opinion contradicts our beliefs about a situation, especially an emotionally charged situation like a divorce, it threatens our ability to recreate that happy emotion. This activates our feelings of shame, unworthiness, and the fear of looking foolish or being wrong. It drives our need to prove to everyone that we’re right and they’re wrong. This is a missed opportunity to change and release old programming that’s keeping us stuck.”

Olivia’s face flushed. Her neck turned bright red, and her jaw tightened. I could tell she wanted to leave, so I continued before she got up.

“Olivia, I know this is difficult feedback to hear, but I’m asking you to spend some time exploring your beliefs about the divorce, your life, and why you continue to feel the need to hold onto the “judge and victim” mentality. It would be helpful for you to uncover where your beliefs originated so that you can heal. Will you do that?” I pleaded.

Olivia abruptly rose to her feet. I saw the anger flare in her eyes as she snapped her head around to face me. “I thought if anyone understood, it would be you, Brenda. I never expected you would take his side. I can barely keep up with my schedule, and now you expect me, who didn’t break up my marriage, to spend time examining why I’m at fault.”

“Again, I’m not taking anyone’s side, and I’m not saying you’re at fault. I’m simply asking you to remove your emotions and the need to be right so that you can look at your life objectively. Like all of us, you have a program running in your consciousness that feeds your negatively aligned belief system about your life. Until you examine that belief system and where it originated, your ego will continue to create resistance and maintain control over you.”

I stood, our eyes locked, and with gentle compassion, I said, “Olivia, you’re the only one who can change your life, but your desire to change has to be stronger than your need to remain the victim.”

She turned and stormed out of my office without saying another word, slamming the door behind her. I shook my head and said a silent prayer for her.

The Power of Belief Systems

You can find various documentaries and research on how belief systems are defined and at what age they start. According to Oxford English Dictionary (OED)¹, a belief system is defined as: “Belief in or acknowledgment of some superhuman power or powers (esp. a god or gods) which is typically manifested in obedience, reverence, and worship; such a belief as part of a system defining a code of living, esp.”

Collins Dictionary² defines belief system as, “The belief system of a person or society is the set of beliefs that they have about what is right and wrong and what is true and false.”

The purpose of dedicating an entire chapter to belief systems is to demonstrate their powerful impact on our lives and overall well-being (both positive and destructive). Without going too deeply into the philosophical, scientific, or medical viewpoints on this topic, I will explore some of the research demonstrating how our belief systems control our lives.

Studies differ on what age children form their belief systems. Some psychologists theorize that behavior patterns start at age seven, while other studies show it as early as age four.

According to a study in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, a child’s capacity for forming belief judgments begins at the age of five (Rao et al. 2009). As adults, we base our lives on the information we absorb during childhood, which is shaped by learned experiences. From these experiences, we develop beliefs and judgments, storing them as memories. The information stored in the brain becomes intertwined with our conscious and unconscious emotions. The researchers further imply that the entanglement of these beliefs and emotions might be why

¹ Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), s.v. “Belief System.”

² Collins Dictionary. (HarperCollins Publishers), s.v. “Belief System.” Retrieved from: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/belief-system>.

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people feel threatened or react with unwarranted aggression when they perceive their beliefs to be challenged.

However, as children, our beliefs were predicated on our parents' opinions, emotions, values, and rules. Our parents' beliefs, perceptions, and judgments reflected how they felt about themselves, which existed before we were born. They defined what was right, wrong, bad, or good, which consistently played out in every conversation we overheard or were part of, which formed our reality. At this young age, we're operating from our subconscious mind because our conscious mind isn't developed yet. So we don't possess the ability to form our own opinion. We operate solely from emotions. We agree with our parents to gain their approval. Then, other people, society, religion, and culture, to name a few, also influence our beliefs.

Our subconscious mind replays our unhealed beliefs, determining our thoughts and feelings, which affect our behavior and decisions. We can change our beliefs at any time because it's a choice. However, it isn't as easy as simply choosing a different belief. Depending on the intensity of our emotional response and how deeply ingrained these beliefs are within us, they can distort our perception of reality. The more impactful the emotional experience, the higher probability of perceiving the belief as true when it isn't.

Take those who suffer from anorexia nervosa disorder. They believe they're overweight. Their emotions supporting this belief are so strong that it drives their decision not to eat as they over-exercise and hide their condition. An anorexic may weigh eighty pounds, but when she looks in the mirror, she believes she is severely overweight. Charged by her emotions, she takes drastic measures to lose more weight.

A belief formed at a young age can stay with us for life if we possess no awareness of where it originated and fail to change it to improve the quality of our life. For example, in the story I told in the *Introduction*, I overheard my mother telling my uncle that I wasn't as smart as my siblings and was a burden to her. She wished I'd never been born. Hearing such hurtful messages at a tender age from a woman I adored and craved approval from shattered my heart and encoded a belief in my mind that I was unworthy and unlovable. I carried this belief into adulthood, attracting people and experiences aligned with those beliefs. It wasn't until I understood how beliefs work and the impact on the subconscious mind, body, and decision-making process that I realized I couldn't heal that experience until I chose different beliefs to heal the effects of that trauma.

When a core belief resides in our subconscious mind, it can cause an emotional trigger and reaction to a situation, and we may not know why we responded the way we did. Until we identify the core belief driving our emotions and where they originated, we'll continue to struggle with making or sustaining changes in our life, thus remaining the victim (consciously or unconsciously).

Being a victim is a learned behavior. As children, we watch adults play the victim role, creating scenarios to get their way or manipulate others to diminish the impact of their actions when they deliberately or unintentionally make a mistake. Some become masters of manipulation, creating scenarios and using others to blame so they can remain the wounded victim. It gives a false sense of power and control and excuses them, in their mind, from taking accountability for their actions.

Daniel, a deacon who served as a spiritual advisor to parishioners, was married to a beautiful woman with a job that required her to be actively involved in the community. She was well-respected and adored, but Daniel was jealous of his wife's many admirers and her deep devotion and dedication to her role in the community. His jealousy became so intense that it caused issues with their marriage. He would accuse her of adultery, become enraged over the time she spent helping others, and disparage her for not giving him the same amount of attention.

Father Paul, the priest of the congregation, started hearing whispers of Daniel's relationships with other women in the parish, with whom he spent time providing spiritual guidance. It became apparent that he was manipulating these women by creating a codependent relationship with them. They were lonely, vulnerable, and hungry to feel worthy of someone's attention. When Father Paul brought up his concerns, Daniel became defensive and argumentative. As the conversation heated up, Daniel blamed his wife for his own behavior, accusing her of infidelity. Father Paul had known Caroline for many years and didn't believe Daniel's accusations, but he could see that Daniel's behavior was causing the demise of their sacred contract of marriage.

So Father Paul invited Daniel to spend the afternoon with him, as well as time in prayer. Daniel shared that when he was in high school, he learned of his father's indiscretions with other women. His friends teased him mercilessly. This scared Daniel deeply. He was angry at his mother for not leaving his father, and he hated his father for the embarrassment and shame he caused the family.

As Father Paul listened, he recognized that Daniel's fear of losing his wife and his strong need to have full control over her originated from his experiences as a teen. But Father Paul

didn't feel Daniel had the awareness to see that his actions of manipulating vulnerable parishioners and emotionally abusing their goodwill was the same behavior as his father's.

Father Paul shared his observations and reminded Daniel that we're here to stay in God's grace through forgiveness, but Daniel immediately defended his actions by continuing to blame his wife. Unconsciously, Daniel was justifying his behavior because he never healed his own trauma. Instead, he became bitter, hid behind his collar, and inflicted pain on other women and his wife because he chose to remain the victim. He chose not to heal.

When you heal, you're accountable for your beliefs, emotions, and changing your behavior. This removes the victim mentality. Unfortunately, Daniel didn't begin his healing journey until many years after he lost his wife and his position in the church.

Your belief system controls what you consider truth and reality. The stronger the emotion, the higher the probability of dismissing others' opinions, even if they have facts to prove your incorrect interpretation. As a result, you might become adamant about proving you're right and others are wrong. Emotionally, this creates an internal struggle because you're operating from a belief system that isn't congruent with reality. So you resist changing your belief system because the realization of the illusion creates fear. This lack of awareness will divert your attention to the need to change others' beliefs and continue to find people who agree with your interpretation, even when you're wrong. This creates a lot of wasted energy, distractions, and emotional distress. And because your ego dictates your need to be right, you'll avoid alternative beliefs regarding the situation. It's a vicious cycle that will repeat until you identify the internal wound that needs healing.

I've seen this paradigm with successful executives, business owners, college students, and high-potential employees. When they're provided feedback that needs improvement, their ego immediately engages, and they're unable to hear the value of the feedback. Instead, they dismiss it because their belief system and internal emotional chatter don't align with their interpretation of the truth. They seek out people who reinforce their story so that they can remain the victim and prove the others wrong.

How often have you rehearsed a conversation in your head after someone upset you? Maybe you rehearse it in the car, when you're out for a walk, in the shower, or working out. That way, you will be ready to prove you're right and they're wrong. Your mind participates in the game and plays the other person while supplying you with their response to your attack. You select your words carefully because you intend to get your point across. Regardless of what the person said, it has no power unless their belief challenges yours. When you do this, your emotions get so tangled up with the need to be right, activating your ego to report front and center, that you don't realize what's going on—you're experiencing an emotional trigger.

An emotional trigger is a byproduct of your belief system that resides in your subconscious. If you can remove the emotions and look at the situation objectively versus the need to attack or react, you'll realize it's a mirror to unhealed trauma. Identify the belief and where it originated from, and you'll understand that the person who upset you is serving as a teacher to bring your awareness to what needs healing. It isn't about them; it's about you releasing your ego and healing the trauma. It's a mirror of how you're treating yourself. Heal your beliefs, and you'll no longer experience the emotional trigger.

Healing your belief system is vital to having a healthy life. As discussed in Chapter 2, How many times have you tried to make a change and failed? You become frustrated and can't stick with the required discipline. What happens, then? Your mind begins the negative self-dialogue, tearing down your self-esteem and self-worth, engaging in self-judgment. Then, your emotions spiral out of control. When this happens repeatedly, you form new beliefs—new facts ingrained in your subconscious because of your experiences. You likely take it a step further and compare yourself to people who, unlike you, accomplished the goal you set out for yourself. This thinking causes you to become a hostage to the emotional stories that feed your mind.

Out of desperation, you may resort to journaling, manifestation techniques, visualization, meditation, reciting affirmations, or other modalities, hoping for that little gem of happiness. When that doesn't work, you might spiral even further and become more discouraged, only to be disappointed again.

Do you wonder why this keeps happening? Why do you continue to struggle after all the time, effort, and money you've spent to make changes? The answer to these questions is simple: you haven't changed your core beliefs about what you're trying to change. Your beliefs about the change drive your emotions, which determine your behavior. This activates the negative mind, creating resistance and controlling what you communicate to yourself and others. And your subconscious mind can't discern between beliefs and facts. It stores beliefs in your memory as facts.

Beliefs play a significant role in shaping our perception of reality. They can either ignite our inspiration and drive us toward success or constrain our progress, potentially resulting in

failure. This accounts for the differences in which people tackle demanding circumstances and explains why some flourish while others stumble.

Sometimes, it's easier to examine your feelings, which can then help you identify your belief patterns. You can do this by paying attention to the words you think and say throughout the day. If someone followed you with a recorder and played back your dialogues at the end of the day, what would you hear? Do you find the good in situations? Are you positive? Complimentary? Happy? Do you display humility and compassion? Do you engage in conflict without becoming defensive? Or are you negative? Do you complain? Do you gossip? Do you blame others? Do you become combative when given constructive feedback? Do you present yourself as the victim or brag about yourself to others? Do you put others down? Are you constantly apologizing for things you don't need to apologize for?

What thoughts are playing out in your head? *I hate this job. I can't stand her. My boss is an idiot who isn't qualified; it should be me. Nobody appreciates me. Why do I always have to work so hard? Everything is a constant struggle. I hate my body. I can never lose weight because diets don't work for me. I'm always sick. I never feel good. I'm so stupid.* Or do you focus on positive thoughts? *What a beautiful day. I'm so grateful for my job. I love my friends. I live in a beautiful home. I feel blessed to have a wonderful husband and loving children. I have people in my life who love me. I'm grateful for my health. I'm fortunate to have money in the bank.*

Changing your beliefs about a situation will change the outcome because as your thoughts and words change, they create different emotions and experiences. Negative vs. positive experiences depend on you.

Repetition is essential if you want to change your life to experience more positive outcomes. This requires you to keep your energy, beliefs, and emotions at the highest vibrational level. This is when the affirmations, manifestation techniques, and other modalities work because you're consistent with the practice and believe you will receive what you desire.

Let's take a look at Olivia and the impact of her childhood belief system. When she came to me, she felt despair and anger. She was at the end of her rope. She felt spiritually, physically, and emotionally exhausted and wanted me to support her belief about her life. After years of overextending herself for everyone else's needs, she finally reached a breaking point. She hid behind many ego masks as a survival mechanism until she lost her identity—who she was at her core. Because of her childhood experiences, she was conditioned to believe that her worth depended on serving others to the detriment of her own well-being. Only then, she believed, would she receive validation, love, and acceptance from others.

Once Olivia started exploring her core beliefs, thoughts, and the words she spoke throughout the day, she realized how her belief patterns had controlled her life and kept her stuck as a victim. Through this awareness, she dug deeper into where her belief patterns originated—her childhood.

Olivia's Childhood Trauma

Olivia grew up as the eldest of six children, and she turned ten the day her mother was diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer. She remembers coming down the stairs, excited to celebrate her birthday. She couldn't wait to open her presents and eat cake and ice cream until

her stomach hurt. She loved birthday cake—vanilla with chocolate icing was her favorite. She knew she would finally get that pink bicycle with the white seat and matching basket. The previous year, she saw it in a store window and saved her money, but she was still short \$53 the last time she counted.

“I’m just bound to get my bike. I’ve been good for almost a month,” Olivia thought as she bounced down the stairs in her favorite floral dress and white frilly lace socks with pink embroidered flowers.

But she stopped when she overheard her parents talking. “Why is Mommy crying?” she thought.

She knew it was wrong to eavesdrop and didn’t want to lose another week’s allowance, but she wanted to know who had upset her mother.

She quietly lowered herself to the stair, praying it wouldn’t creak, and leaned her head between the wooden railings in order to hear her parents’ voices. Remembering how much trouble she got into for eavesdropping before, she looked up at the number of stairs she would have to quickly run up to escape to her bedroom if her father got up from the table.

“What are we going to do, Jack? How are we going to tell the children?” she overheard her mother say.

“We’ll fight it. We’ll get you the best treatment there is,” her father said with desperation in his voice.

“You heard the doctor. It’s stage four. Even if we could get the best treatment available, where would we get the money?”

“Please don’t talk like that. We can. . .”

“Stop. Please. My babies. My sweet babies. We need to make arrangements. We need to tell our families.”

Olivia felt confused. “What was Mommy talking about? Stage four? What do they need to tell the family? Is she having another baby? I hope it’s a girl. The last thing I need is another brother,” she thought.

Her father scooted back in his chair and stood. Not wanting to get caught, Olivia shot up the stairs taking two at a time, darting back into her bedroom. She lay on her bed, her heart pounding, hoping her father hadn’t heard her. She lay still, not moving a muscle so that she could hear if her dad come up the stairs.

She wasn’t sure how much time passed before her father opened her bedroom door and turned on the light. She rubbed her eyes, realizing she had fallen asleep. “Is the birthday girl ready for her present?” her father asked.

“Oh, yes, Daddy! Did I get my bike? Did I, Daddy?” she exclaimed.

“You’ll have to see. Everyone is downstairs waiting for you. How about a piggyback ride for the birthday girl?”

Olivia jumped up, swung her arms around her father’s neck, and giggled.

“Oh, Daddy, I’m so excited. I can’t wait to open my presents. I’m nearly a teenager.”

He ignored that statement and bounced down the stairs, making horse sounds and bucking his body like he would buck her off. She squealed with delight, followed by deep belly laughs as she tightened her grip.

“There’s my beautiful birthday girl,” her mother said as Olivia reached for her and wrapped her arms tightly around her neck.

“I love you, Mommy.”

“I love you, too, sweet girl. Now, how about you blow out these candles and make a wish!”

Everyone ate cake and ice cream. Olivia opened her presents from her brothers and sisters, hiding her disappointment that she didn't see her bike. When she heard a bell, she turned to see her dad pushing the same bike she had seen in the store window. It had a big red bow on the handlebars. It had a banana seat with an explosion of colored daisies. The white basket adorned a pink flower centered in the middle. Her eyes widened, and her cheeks turned red with excitement.

“For me? Is it really for me? I've waited so long.” And then, through her excitement, she cried. She wiped her eyes with her arm through sobs and hiccups and thanked her parents. “Now, I can ride with my friends to the clubhouse and be part of the secret club. Thank you, Mommy. Thank you, Daddy. I'm so happy!”

Olivia jumped on her bike. Her mother looked so happy, but then, her eyes filled with tears.

Years later, sitting in my office, Olivia realized that her mother was probably grief-stricken that it would be the last birthday she would share with her eldest daughter. She imagined her mom slipping into the kitchen and burying her face into a kitchen towel as she sobbed quietly.

As a child, Olivia forgot about the conversation she overheard between her parents. She enjoyed the short summer and loved being the envy of her friends with her new bicycle. Then,

one hot August day, she walked through the front door, letting the screen door slam behind her. Hungry, hot, and thirsty, she got a tall glass of lemonade from the refrigerator and sneaked a cookie before dinner when she saw her parents sitting at the kitchen table. Her mother was crying, as her father cradled her hands.

“Mommy, what’s wrong?” Olivia asked.

“Olivia, your father and I need to talk to you. Please sit down.”

“Did I do something wrong, Mommy?”

“No, no, not at all.”

“Olivia, Mommy is very sick,” her father said. “Mommy has a bad disease that is incurable. It’s called cancer.” He struggled to keep his voice steady.

“Can’t you take her to the doctor and have him fix her, Daddy?”

“No, we already asked the doctor.” Her father reached across the table to take Olivia’s hand.

Her heart started to beat faster, and sweat ran down her back. She was petrified as she waited for her father to continue.

“We’ll need your help around the house more. Mommy won’t be able to keep up, and I have to work. We’ll need you to help care of your brothers and sisters and pick up more chores around the house. Whatever Mommy needs. Can you do that? Can you be Mommy’s little helper?”

As the weeks went on, Olivia managed the household—cooking, cleaning, bathing her younger siblings, and reading to them as she tucked them in for the night. Her father got home

late from work, ate, and sat by her mother's bed. Olivia wouldn't go into her mother's room. She was told not to disturb her because she needed her rest.

As a result, Olivia felt alone and isolated, as well as angry that she couldn't play with her friends. She loved when her grandmother visited because she had someone to help her, but her grandma only stayed for a week because she lived too far away.

As the days passed, Olivia became more impatient, frustrated, and angry at her mother for being sick. She resented having to shoulder so much responsibility, and she wondered how long she would have to carry such a heavy load.

One afternoon, she felt so frustrated with her brothers that she thought she would explode. They wrestled in the front room, arguing over a toy, and she yelled at them to stop. She took the toy away and sent them outside to play. Ten minutes later, after she straightened up the front room, she looked out the bay window to check on her brothers playing tag in the front yard. She saw her friends ride by on their bicycles and felt a pang of jealousy. The anger welled up inside her until she thought, "That's it. I'll march into Mommy's bedroom and tell her how unfair it is. I don't care that I'm not supposed to bother her."

Olivia approached her mother's door. Her heart pounded as she clamped a sweaty hand around the cold door handle. Defiantly, she swung the door open. Before she could say anything, the image of the woman lying in her mom's bed took her breath away. She didn't look like her mother at all.

Her mother passed away that evening. As Olivia lay in her own bed, she was overwhelmed by feelings of grief, guilt, and despair. How could she have been so selfish? "I'm such a bad girl. Mommy will never forgive me," she thought.

Olivia never recovered fully from her mother's death. Her father remarried the following year, and even though her stepmother was somewhat of a surrogate mother, she couldn't replace her own mother's love, grace, and gentleness. So she never bonded with her stepmother. In fact, none of the kids did. They continued to depend on Olivia, and she felt a strong responsibility to devote her life to caring for her siblings.

She was surprised to uncover two unconscious core beliefs that she had formed after losing her mother to cancer. She believed she didn't deserve happiness because she felt that her deep-rooted anger was responsible for her mother's death. The second core belief was that in order to feel worthy, loved, and validated, she had to take care of the needs of others before her own. She vowed never to show her frustration like she felt toward her mother when she was sick. Subconsciously, she believed this diligent devotion would prevent her from feeling more guilt and sorrow. She wouldn't be the reason for anyone else's death.

Olivia's story demonstrates the powerful impact of beliefs and how they can control the quality of our lives. What beliefs about yourself keep you stuck? Unhappy? In suffering? The need for control? The need to be right and prove others wrong? What childhood beliefs are you holding onto that aren't yours? Which ego mask are you wearing? The Villain, the Victim, the Judge, the Pleaser, the Martyr, the Princess, or others?

Did you grow up hearing things like:

“As long as you live under my roof, you will do as you're told and keep your mouth shut!”

“I didn't ask you for your opinion. Your opinion doesn't matter.”

“You'll never be successful. Your job is in the home.”

“Children are seen, not heard.”

“Your needs aren’t important. Your job is to take care of your family.”

“You will eat what’s on your plate and like it, or go to bed hungry.”

Or did you grow up in a family that believed in you? That told you that you were a powerful, strong, independent girl who could move mountains? That you’re unstoppable and can achieve whatever you want? That you’re talented, smart, and funny? That if you just believe, you can enjoy a life filled with happiness and success?

Can you feel the change in energy between the heavy, dense, negative conditioning vs. the confident, encouraging, and positive frequency that raises your vibrational energy and thoughts? Remember, others’ beliefs about you hold no power over you unless you give them power.

As you’ve learned in this chapter, your belief systems are powerful mechanisms and can substantially affect how you live your life, what you think, and how you feel. Today is yesterday’s tomorrow. Everything you experience is playing out from yesterday because of your belief system.

It takes twenty-one days to initiate a change in pattern. By choosing different beliefs, you can redefine your reality, watch your life change, and emerge into the person you desire to be.

A Special Message

To all the women and men who serve as role models to children, ask yourself what beliefs you’re passing on to them. Are you passing on the beliefs you were conditioned to believe about yourself? Beliefs that allow you to control them through shame, power, or

manipulation? Or are you passing on beliefs that inspire your children to have the courage, confidence, and perseverance to manifest the life they desire, even if it contradicts what you want for them?

Our children are the future leaders in this big, complicated world. Let's teach them to know and claim their power! To develop healthy, happy belief patterns that belong to them, not us. Let's enable them to believe they can succeed. Let's teach our children to believe in themselves and have humility, accountability, and respect. To be limitless. Let's teach them to be authentic. Let's be role models to our future leaders and generations. Let them grow into the unique beings God created and give them the wings to fly.

Exercise: Exploring Your Belief System

In the previous chapter, you identified a change you wanted to make and the limiting beliefs preventing you from making that change. This exercise will guide you deeper into your belief system and help you release outdated thoughts so that you can create new experiences.

Below are suggestions to guide you through this exercise.

1. **Identify your Core Beliefs:** It's essential to distinguish between what YOU believe, not what others impose upon you or expect of you. The more honest you are with your answers, the faster the healing begins. When you uncover a belief or peel back a layer of beliefs, sit with that information, and gently process your emotions by writing in your journal. There are no wrong answers. You feel what you feel. Remember, it's not about judgment; it's about getting to the core of your belief system and allowing healing to occur.

2. **Embrace your Emotions:** You may be surprised by the emotions you experience when you discover where some of your deep-rooted belief(s) originated and from whom. That's okay, but you'll also want to release the blame, hate, anger, or resentment toward the person who influenced the beliefs. When you hold onto these toxic emotions, it only hurts you, not them, because adults repeat the beliefs instilled within them without understanding the damage they inflicted. It's a learned behavior. This isn't to excuse their behavior but to encourage you to forgive them so that you can free yourself.
3. **Engage in Self-Love and Compassion:** Refrain from judging yourself. Instead, be gentle, as if you're helping a five-year-old understand why she's hurting. That five-year-old is your inner child who wants to be healed and loved.
4. **Take Frequent Breaks:** Take your time. This exercise isn't intended to be completed in one sitting. Remember that you're allowing yourself to feel emotions you may have hidden for years. Take a break if you need it. Walk in nature, take an Epsom salt bath, do a workout, or engage in whatever activity will help you release the energy.

We hold many beliefs that prevent us from living our desired lives. What we believe and the energy we invest in our thoughts become our reality and shape our future experiences. However, beliefs can be changed, and now that you understand their power, your past no longer needs to define you. Your issues no longer need to be your truth. Change happens in the present moment, and by changing your beliefs, you transform your life. Let's begin.

1. What belief(s) keep you paralyzed, stuck, or have negatively influenced your life?
2. How have these beliefs limited you?

3. Where did these beliefs originate, and from whom? Were they passed down from generation to generation?
4. Is this belief still true for you? Why or why not?
5. Do you recognize that your limiting beliefs weren't based on your reality but on that of others?
6. How would your life be different if you didn't have these toxic beliefs?
7. As difficult as it was, what lesson did you gain from this experience? What did the beliefs teach you? For example, has it given you the courage to take back your power, make you stronger and more independent, say no, or are you ready to walk away from disrespectful, overpowering people, etc.?
8. Are you willing to replace your negative beliefs with new, empowering beliefs that reflect your true, beautiful self?
9. Review your list of old, outdated beliefs, and replace them with new positive beliefs. As you write your new belief statements, try to start each with I AM. Beginning an affirmation with I AM directs the energy straight to you and holds more power. It's a declaration to the universe that you know you deserve and are ready to receive these blessings. It realigns your negative ego mind as positive energy flows through your heart, and your intentions are released into the universe for manifestation. For example, I AM grateful for what this experience taught me. I AM worthy. I AM successful. I AM deserving of the life I desire. I AM beautiful. I AM awakened to my new life, and everything flows effortlessly.

10. After you've completed your I AM statements, prioritize them and pick the top two or three. Close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and relax. Recite the first statement out loud. Feel the emotions it evokes. How does it feel to manifest your I AM intention? What does it look like? What colors and images do you see? Write your reflections in your journal.
11. Once you've mastered that feeling, try another statement. If you can only focus on one, that's fine.
12. Recite your affirmation several times a day. It's essential that you believe what you're stating is manifesting. This requires patience.

To help you remember, make your affirmation your wallpaper on your phone, put it on stickies around the house, your mirror, or in your car—whatever works best for you. Continue this practice, and watch the positive changes start to unfold.