

Tool: Mastery Is a Belief

TIP

Beliefs Empower

If we believe we can accomplish something, it is much more likely that we will actually achieve it. Beliefs anticipate success or failure. What we believe is more important than consequences, feedback or reality. Our beliefs about the future can knock out a goal from even being considered. They help us to decide what to start, how much effort to put in and whether to persist.

TIP

Beliefs About...

Am I capable?

Will I be supported or blocked?

What do I expect to happen?

Are resources available?

Is there opportunity out there?

Is it safe or unsafe?

Are there obstacles?

TIP

Fundamental Errors

1. When our performance is poor, we tend to blame a non-responsive environment and not our lack of skill or motivation. ("I am not doing well in high school because I have bad teachers.")

2. When negative stereotypes are pervasive, for those for whom the stereotypes are about, they tend to use these stereotypical beliefs as explanations.

("I am not doing well in high school because no one of my culture does well.")

Consider

1. Write down the initials of a direct report who may not be working up to their potential and who you would like to help build or reinstate more enabling beliefs.
2. What is their most likely mindset?
 - 1. The environment around here is unsupportive. (unfair pay, difficult co-workers, unfair rules)
 - 2. Why bother. I'm not capable or I'm most likely to fail?
 - 3. I am capable and can do whatever I set my mind to.
 - 4. I thought I was capable. Now I am not sure.
3. What strategy have you or might you use to help them build or rebuild more positive beliefs? (A few key descriptors)

Strategies to Build Capability Beliefs

1. Negative beliefs about the environment trump a personally relevant purpose
 - Eliminate any hygiene issues (unfair pay, difficult supervisor, erratic rules) so that the negative beliefs have little or no foundation
2. To develop positive beliefs about skills and success
 - Conduct a reality check: Do they have enough skill to succeed? Is the environment truly responsive?
 - Value and reward their effort, provide evidence of progress (e.g. wall chart)
 - Have them observe or talk with a similar successful role models
 - Ask them to remember a time when...; Share positive stories
 - Ask them to imagine the possibility of success
 - Provide direct evidence: Ask them to directly engage in actions that demonstrate the capability and the friendliness of the environment
3. For folks who already possess strongly held beliefs about their ability
 - Remind them of these beliefs and encourage mental rehearsal, positive self-talk, affirmations
 - Provide expert guidance with informational feedback about their ability
4. To reinstate positive beliefs after a failure or negative message
 - Talk to role models who have similar experiences to explain failure differently
 - Write or present to others positive explanation of failure
 - Do whatever it takes to do something that reminds them of positive beliefs and satisfied accomplishment ("get right back on the horse that threw you")
 - Try out something; Take one small step; Write down ideas; A mini-experiment Collect more "data" to offset the negative message
 - Create a safe, supportive environment
 - Put "bounds" on failure: Ask them: Is failure persistent or pervasive? What was effort like? How might you put this event behind you?
 - Ask them to compare themselves at different times (vs. compare to another)
 - Stop them from rehearsing negative events