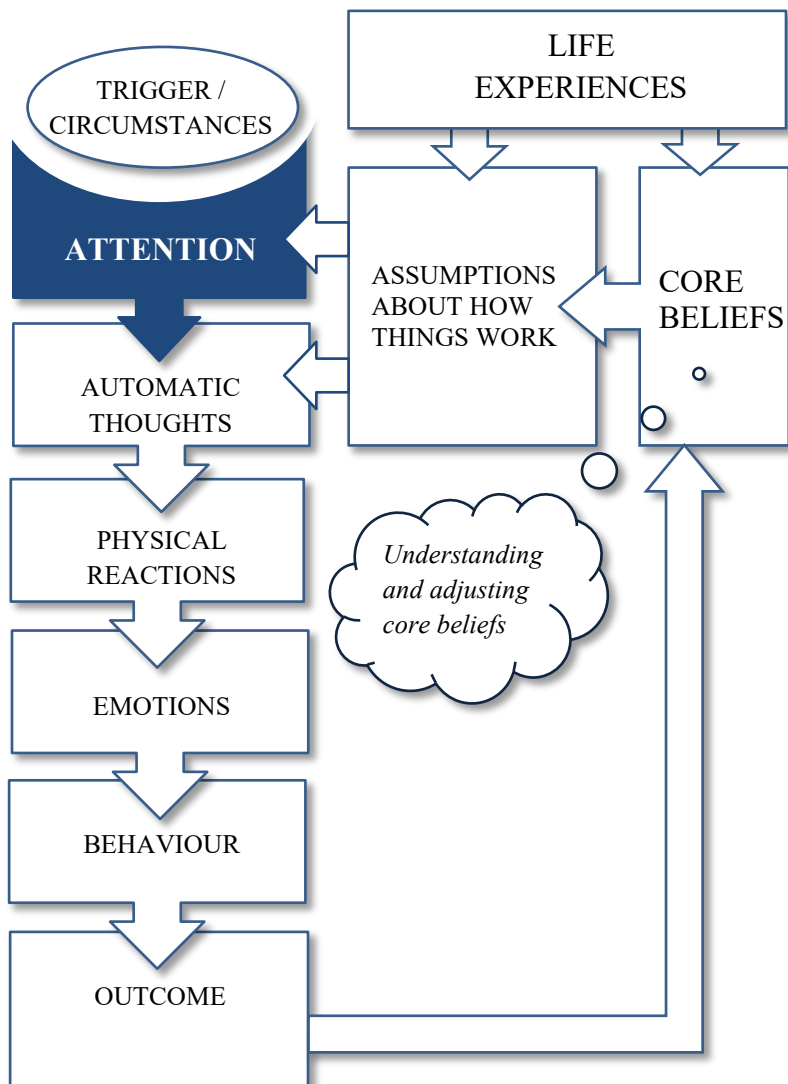


OVERCOMING DEPRESSION - 10  
**THE CORE OF IT - 1**

**Figure 1:**  
**BUILDING BLOCKS**  
**OF DEPRESSION**



**Figure 2:**  
 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
 AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS,  
 RULES AND CORE BELIEFS.

## WHAT ARE CORE BELIEFS?

Core beliefs are beliefs that are held at a much deeper level than automatic thoughts that come to mind in response to triggers.

Figure 1 shows the full CBT model of depression and depicts the interaction between life events, assumptions and core beliefs (number 7 on the diagram). However it is easier to understand the concept of core beliefs by looking at Figure 2. First let's refresh our understanding of automatic thoughts and rules.

**AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS** are words or images that come into our minds automatically. If you think of an analogy of weeds and flowers in the garden, automatic thoughts are weeds that we learn to remove with practice. Quite often all we need to do is to cut out the weeds and their roots just dry out as we start planting new flowers and there is no room to grow. In our picture, automatic thoughts are the top part of the plant – relatively easy to notice.

**UNDERLINING RULES AND ASSUMPTIONS** are not as obvious but you can identify them by thinking about the intended function of our behaviours in difficult situations. They usually take shape of “if – then” rules. Underlining assumptions are like a stalk of the plant as they allow our flower to move with the wind and turn towards the sun.


**CORE BELIEFS** tend to be all-or-nothing statements about ourselves, others or life in general. These are more resistant to our efforts at weeding. You can think of these as roots. Most people hold both negative and positive core beliefs. Our core beliefs come to our attention based on our moods. If you are frustrated with task at hand and find that you can't complete it, chances are that you believe yourself to be stupid. On the other hand, if the task is completed with ease, you believe yourself to be clever. These might sound almost like automatic thoughts but there are certain differences:

- Core beliefs usually hurt the most
- Core beliefs often remain at the back of our minds and stop us from going out of our comfort zone (“I am too stupid to try anything anyways”, “I am just unlovable. Why would I try to have a relationship?”)
- Core beliefs usually come as a conclusion to the chain of the automatic thoughts (“This person stood me up. I got stood up in the past. They have agreed to the date just to be able to cut the conversation short. No wonder: I am unlovable”)
- We tend to avoid situations that can trigger negative core beliefs.
- You can think of your hurtful core beliefs as key fears. No one wants to be “stupid”, “unlovable” or “inadequate”. Consequently most of us might end up by avoiding situations that activate such beliefs about ourselves. Alternatively we create a variety of protective rules that enable us to face such situations without feeling awful while still not challenging the deep core beliefs. For example statements like “I am not interested in relationships” or “People are selfish” might hide fears of not being good enough or of being abandoned whenever you attempt to set some boundaries.

If you still have trouble distinguishing between automatic thoughts and core beliefs, you can use the downward arrow technique. The table below illustrates how downward arrow technique allowed Tom to identify his core beliefs about self, other people and the world in general. The downward arrow technique requires that you ask yourself a series of probing questions that assume that your automatic thoughts are true until you reach a conclusion that is quite painful and generic. Unfortunately, such conclusions occur under the surface quite often and immobilize us even more than our automatic thoughts. When depressed feelings have been with us for a very long time, our core beliefs become our automatic thoughts simply because we encounter them so often.

<b>INITIAL REACTION</b>	1: SITUATION (Describe the situation in which you have experience a negative shift in mood): <i>Tom was asked by his boss to meet him in the morning but the meeting got cancelled at the last minute.</i>		
	2: THOUGHTS (List the negative thoughts that come to your mind when thinking about this situation): <i>"Why did he cancel? He doesn't appreciate my time. I must have made some sort of mistake. Why wasn't Jenny called in as well? After all we work as a team."</i>		
<b>FINDING CORE BELIEFS</b>	<b>SORT YOUR BELIEFS INTO THEMES</b>		
	<b>A: SELF</b>	<b>B: OTHER PEOPLE</b>	<b>C: LIFE IN GENERAL</b>
	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to you and write them down in the column below	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to other people and write them down in the column below	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to life in general and write them down in the column below
	↓	↓	↓
	<i>"I must have made some sort of mistake"</i>	<i>Why did he cancel? He doesn't appreciate my time.</i>	<i>Why wasn't Jenny called in as well? After all we work as a team.</i>
	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about me?	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about other people?	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about life in general?
	↓	↓	↓
	<i>"I don't know what I am doing at work"</i>	<i>"He does not care about my time and my schedule"</i>	<i>"She will get away from having to have an uncomfortable meeting"</i>
<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about me?	<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about other people?	<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about life in general?	
↓	↓	↓	
<i>I am incompetent.</i>	<i>They don't care.</i>	<i>Life is not fair.</i>	

## IDENTIFYING CORE BELIEFS

<b>INITIAL REACTION</b>	1: SITUATION (Describe the situation in which you have experience a negative shift in mood):		
	2: THOUGHTS (List the negative thoughts that come to your mind when thinking about this situation):		
<b>FINDING CORE BELIEFS</b>	<b>SORT YOUR BELIEFS INTO THEMES</b> 		
	<b>A: SELF</b>	<b>B: OTHER PEOPLE</b>	<b>C: LIFE IN GENERAL</b>
	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to you and write them down in the column below	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to other people and write them down in the column below	<b>1:</b> Check if any of the thoughts that were provoked by this situation relate to life in general and write them down in the column below
	↓	↓	↓
	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about me?	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about other people?	<b>2:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about life in general?
	↓	↓	↓
	<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about me?	<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about other people?	<b>3:</b> Ask yourself: If the above statement were true, what does it mean about life in general?
	↓	↓	↓

## ADJUSTING CORE BELIEFS

<b>A: HOW YOU BELIEVE THINGS ARE</b>			
<b>1:</b> Write down the negative core belief that you would like to change: "I am unlikeable"	<b>2:</b> Evidence that supports your negative core belief: I have very few friends People do not talk to me, I don't have a romantic relationship; My last boyfriend told me that I drew him mad. My parents disliked me and told me I was good for nothing I was passed for the promotion.	<b>3:</b> Evidence against you're your negative core belief: There are couple of people who like me; I had very good relationship with my sister; I had a romantic relationship even if it failed; I have good reviews at work; I get invited to get-togethers	<b>4:</b> Impact this belief has on your life: I isolate myself I give up I test people to see if they like me but that drives them away I spend a lot of time thinking about what is wrong with me. I don't take good care of myself
<b>B: WHAT BELIEF WOULD BE MORE USEFUL?</b>			
<b>5:</b> Write down a useful core belief: "I am a reasonably likeable human being"	<b>6:</b> Write down any evidence that you might have to support this useful belief: I have some friends I had a few pleasant conversations recently I get invited	<b>7:</b> What would you be doing if you believed this useful core belief? I would spend more time with others I would not put others through tests I would talk more I would invite others to visit or spend time with me I would approach coworkers with suggestions I would be able to tell someone I care about that I care about them without worrying about a public rejection. I would give and accept compliments.	
<b>8:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief?			
<b>C: MAKING IT HAPPEN</b>			
<b>9:</b> Over the next week gather the evidence that supports your useful core belief. Stick to facts, situations and descriptions of your behaviours that match the useful core belief. Make sure to do what you would be doing if you believed this useful core belief.			
Day	Observations that support preferred core belief	Actions that support preferred core belief	
Monday	Pleasant conversation at lunch; surprise call from a friend	Chatted with a friend; send out an e-vite; had lunch with others at work	
Tuesday	People responded to e-vite and agreed to go to movies on the week end; chatted with people at work	Initiated conversations at work; offered compliments	
Wednesday	Normal conversations – no accusations or arguments	Continues to interact without hiding away; chatted with a lady at the coffee counter	
Thursday	Received compliments; pleasant conversations; lady at the coffee counter recognized me	Took an effort to dress nicely; continued to interact; Responded to e-mails and calls without overthinking	
Friday	Normal conversations – no accusations or arguments from others; a person directed me towards a free parking spot;	Greet and smile; interact; have small talk Take care of appearance Took effort not to dwell on the day's events	
Saturday	Had good time at the movies with two of my friends (acquaintances?; one person cancelled but had a good reason and took a rain check)	Go out with others Took effort not to dwell on the day's events	
Sunday	Some people smiled at me; I had a conversation with a stranger about their dog.	Went for a walk instead of staying at home Took effort not to over-analyze things	
<b>10:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief now?			

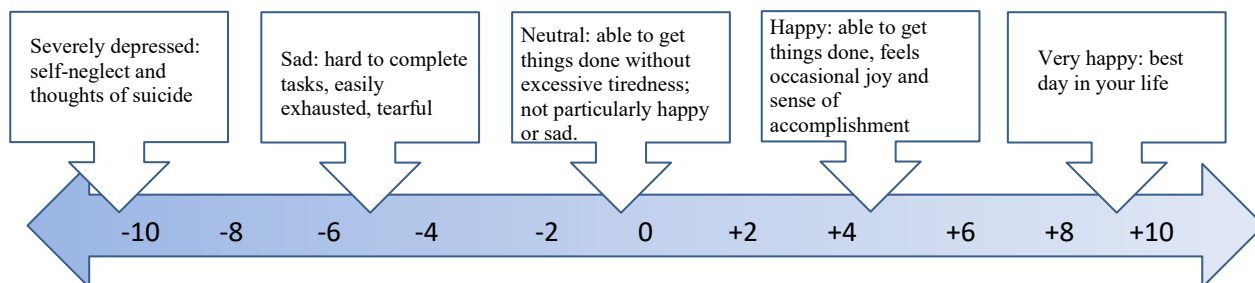
## ADJUSTING CORE BELIEFS

<b>A: HOW YOU BELIEVE THINGS ARE</b>			
<b>1:</b> Write down the negative core belief that you would like to change:	<b>2:</b> Evidence that supports your negative core belief:	<b>3:</b> Evidence against you're your negative core belief:	<b>4:</b> Impact this belief has on your life:
<b>B: WHAT BELIEF WOULD BE MORE USEFUL?</b>			
<b>5:</b> Write down a useful core belief:	<b>6:</b> Write down any evidence that you might have to support this useful belief:	<b>7:</b> What would you be doing if you believed this useful core belief?	
<b>8:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief?			
<b>C: MAKING IT HAPPEN</b>			
<b>9:</b> Over the next week gather the evidence that supports your useful core belief. Stick to facts, situations and descriptions of your behaviours that match the useful core belief. Make sure to do what you would be doing if you believed this useful core belief.			
Day	Observations that support preferred core belief	Actions that support preferred core belief	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
<b>10:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief now?			

## ADJUSTING CORE BELIEFS

<b>A: HOW YOU BELIEVE THINGS ARE</b>			
<b>1:</b> Write down the negative core belief that you would like to change:	<b>2:</b> Evidence that supports your negative core belief:	<b>3:</b> Evidence against you're your negative core belief:	<b>4:</b> Impact this belief has on your life:
<b>B: WHAT BELIEF WOULD BE MORE USEFUL?</b>			
<b>5:</b> Write down a useful core belief:	<b>6:</b> Write down any evidence that you might have to support this useful belief:	<b>7:</b> What would you be doing if you believed this useful core belief?	
<b>8:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief?			
<b>C: MAKING IT HAPPEN</b>			
<b>9:</b> Over the next week gather the evidence that supports your useful core belief. Stick to facts, situations and descriptions of your behaviours that match the useful core belief. Make sure to do what you would be doing if you believed this useful core belief.			
Day	Observations that support preferred core belief	Actions that support preferred core belief	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
<b>10:</b> How much do you believe the useful core belief now?			

## KEEPING TRACK AND KEEPING HONEST



<b>DATE:</b>							
Rate your overall mood for the day using the scale above and mark it on the graph.	+10						
	+8						
	+6						
	+4						
	+2						
	0						
	-2						
	-4						
	-6						
	-8						
-10							
What challenges / stresses were you faced with today?							
Did you engage in any meaningful activity? If so, what was it?							
What skill have you practiced?	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/> Engage in meaningful activity <input type="checkbox"/> Thought Record <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge Assumptions <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Doing what Makes Sense <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Core Beliefs
What other things were you able to accomplish?							