

## **LOOSENING THE GRIP OF CORE LIMITING BELIEFS**

**By Pierre Zimmerman**

Our core beliefs are often based on our earliest and potent fears, lodged in our brain from early childhood on. They are based on strong assumptions, conclusions and conditioned survival skills that have little to do with the present moment. While they served a purpose in the past, our brains are designed to anticipate the future, and past memories of endangerment are stuck in the long-term memory part of the hippocampus.

If it happened before, most likely it is bound to happen again, we presume. A few failures can still instill feelings of helplessness, deficiencies, humiliation and shame. Most of our core beliefs are reinforced by past hurt and fear, and strangely enough, dearly holding on to them. "I am not good enough," is maybe the most common belief from which stems self-devaluation, self-degradation and rejection. The greater the degree of early life trauma or consistent stress, the more likelihood there will be of deeply entrenched fear-based beliefs and a tendency to isolate.

Deprivation, poverty, racial and gender biases, abuse, and condemnations affect us, and even though they are rooted in the past, they feel current and true. The Buddha said, "with our thoughts we fabricate the world." When people pull away, our sense of rejection will confirm our belief. When we believe that nobody likes us, we will behave in ways that broadcast our insecurities. If we have a tendency to believe that others will attack or criticize us, we will more than likely become defensive or aggressive.

Using our attention and awareness, we are able to disconfirm these beliefs and ask ourselves, "Is this really true?" When we note fear thoughts, we can create some space between ourselves and our beliefs and realize that the underlying beliefs are real but not true! They are appearances, interpretations of reality that entrap us. Taking refuge in the present moment, dropping into the felt sense of our body's experience, we are able to use our aliveness, intelligence and compassion to see the downside of the beliefs and narratives of unworthiness and "badness" that we tell ourselves.

PZ/2/21/21