

Combat Veteran's Guidebook | 2 | It's All Energy & Beliefs

Everything is made of energy. Including you.

And your thoughts.

You understand when your physical energy fluctuates. Your body feels tired, you can't concentrate, your skill level drops.

But did you know that your emotional and mental energy also fluctuates?

It's all tied together. Body-mind-spirit. You-your environment-people around you-the world.

It all impacts how you feel.

You have external and internal energy informing how you feel.

Internal energy includes what you eat, drink, digest. How much sleep you get. Meds and drugs.

But mostly, what you think about.

Your thoughts create your feelings. And because so much of what you think about is heavy, dark, sad, depressing, regretful, longing, and negative, you feel that way, too.

Emotions themselves are neutral. They're not positive or negative. They just are what they are. They reflect what's in your heart and mind.

They're normal and natural. None of them are forbidden.

ALL emotions are permissible, including crying. They are all expressions of what it is to be a human being.

The problem comes when we get stuck in a rut of thoughts.

When we focus over and over on the same thoughts, we create grooves in our brain that become automatic pathways for how we feel.

If you have a brain injury, it is normal for you to struggle with guiding, forming, directing, controlling your thoughts. Being mindful of what you can and cannot control can be liberating. If you are unsure of what your brain injury is doing to you, please ask your physician for insight.

No matter if your brain is injured or not, Awareness is the first step to newness.

You know that if you think you're defeated before you go into battle, you already are. Likewise, if you assume you are powerless to direct your thoughts, you will be.

To any degree you can, take back your power over your thoughts.

Become aware of the ruts your mind automatically falls into – and when you are aware, choose to say No to going down that path again. Or find ways to distract your attention, is possible.

You must train your brain, just as you do your body. It takes practice, it takes not giving up when you don't see immediate results. It takes a determination to keep trying.

Even if you have a brain injury, do what you can.

Study yourself, and learn how your brain reacts now. When you feel a way you don't want to feel, ask yourself: What am I thinking? What thoughts are making me feel this way?

Find what works to distract yourself and re-direct your attention when you start to sink into the darkness.

Then, just as you would provide your muscles the right amounts of nutrition to bulk up, start feeding your brain new thoughts to think about.

It may feel forced, uncomfortable, awkward, and pointless at first.

Keep doing it.

New thoughts are going to lead to new feelings.

Feed your Self positive, life-giving thoughts. Start saying No to old beliefs, ideas and thoughts that are keeping you stuck.

The only thing you ever truly control in life is your perspective, and from your perspective flows your feelings.

These struggles feel so solid.

They are made of thoughts and feelings.

Thoughts and feelings can be changed.

Many of the well-worn ruts of thoughts become what we call beliefs.

What is a belief? A belief is just a thought that you keep thinking over and over, doing so reinforces the sense that it is truth. But beliefs are not some solid, unchangeable energy.

You are allowed to change your beliefs.

In fact, you must to keep growing as a person.

Everything you have ever believed has served you in some way – either to keep you safe, get you through something, motivate you, guide you, etc. But a belief's purpose expires.

If a belief still serves your wellbeing, keep it. If it does not, let it go. Choose to no longer believe it. Much of your personal freedom in life comes when you understand that you are allowed to change what you believe, which then changes your feelings, and sets the stage for you to change your life.

You are allowed to change.

Change to be more fully You; not to meet someone else's version of you.

This is a recovery process we're in. We're chipping away, dropping entire belief systems and thoughts that you have outgrown and no longer need. It's renovation and restoration. And it is a process, not an event.

It happens both instantly and gradually over time.

We resist change because we fear the unknown. Change is disruptive. Something has to end in order for something else to begin (which may just be a thought you believed). It's disruptive when it requires that you leave behind relationships, jobs, lifestyles, homes, habits, beliefs that no longer align with who you are.

But change is how we emerge into newness. And change can be inviting when it enables you to be more connected to those you love, or requires you to position yourself in places/situations/relationships/habits that make you happier and more fulfilled.

Go at your own pace.

Move at the pace of creation.

Below are questions for you to explore to help you identify your beliefs and see if they still support your highest good. Feel free to go through them repeatedly about different topics you have beliefs about. You will find some liberating realizations very quickly.

Remember, you have the power and the right to change what you believe.

If you aren't sure if a belief supports you, focus on this: *How do I want to feel? Does this belief support that feeling?*

1. What do I believe about myself? (Watch for the Inner Critic to pipe up here).
2. Where did those beliefs come from? (Parents, school, friends, childhood experiences, relatives, society, religion, the military)
3. How do I know 100% these beliefs are absolutely true about me? (They are NOT true just because someone else says they are – only YOU get to define who you are. Most of what we believe about ourselves, we absorb like sponges from people in our lives, what we tell ourselves about experiences we go through, and from people whose opinion we respect. What other people think of us tells us nothing about who we really are. It only tells you about what the other person perceives, believes, expects you to be like. It can tell you how your behavior though is impacting another person's feelings.)
4. What beliefs no longer support who I am or who I want to be?
5. What are new beliefs that support how I want to feel and represent who I want to be now?

Write down your new beliefs and post them where you will see them every day.