

CHALLENGE III

PREPARING YOUR MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT

I realize that I experienced an incredible amount of personal and professional growth the past year. I made a lot of changes. I feel like I blossomed. I expanded—in knowledge, in life, in experience, in love.

Preparing the mind, body and spirit for entrepreneurship is like preparing the mind, body and spirit for the Olympics. We change and improve ourselves. Preparing for entrepreneurship requires similar changes—a preparation that is beyond our normal, everyday lives. Just like the Olympic trainer knows he or she will need to train differently to move into a greater level of competition, so it is with us. We need to prepare ourselves by making changes to win this race against ourselves, to outrace old patterns and ways of thinking and living, to move beyond what we have known and done in the past.

Things do not change, we change.

Henry David Thoreau

Examine Your Beliefs

I need to go back—way back—to seek out my old beliefs and rewrite them so they work for me instead of against me.

Beliefs are what we believe about our circumstances or ourselves. Beliefs are typically unconscious thoughts that lay the foundation for our lives. They are the basis for how we live, how we act and how we function in the world. Beliefs can work for us or against us. Often, we do not recognize which beliefs work against us until an issue arises where we see a pattern and begin to ask ourselves what belief we have that consistently brings a particular circumstance into our lives. For example, sometimes people have a belief that life is really very difficult and so they unconsciously create situations that reinforce that belief. Our beliefs can affect our personal and professional lives. That same belief of thinking that life is difficult may translate in our professional lives to attracting clients who won't pay us or who mistreat us. How we are treated can often be reflected in what we believe we deserve or how we believe we should be treated.

Examining beliefs, seeing what they are and changing them, if necessary—is essential for a healthy life and entrepreneurial journey. Many clients have old beliefs that need to be changed. Often, these beliefs are about money. Old beliefs about money can seriously affect a business without your even being aware of how they impact you.

You may have always heard from your parents that a desire for money meant you were greedy or bad. Rosemary grew up believing that having money was bad. Some of the messages she shared after reflecting on this issue and writing down her thoughts were, “Money leads to evil,” “Rich people lie,” “Money will make me greedy.” Rosemary had a difficult time recognizing her beliefs because they were the only beliefs about money that she had ever known. She never thought of challenging them or evaluating them because they were part of her.

So, how do you get in touch with your beliefs? The first step is to write down thoughts and reflect on areas that seem to be patterns in your life. Mike did this exercise and saw that he had a lot of trouble with his beliefs about money. He didn’t understand why he continually had financial struggles. He was intelligent and a smart businessman but he wasn’t able to make a living without struggling. He began to ask himself why he had these challenges. What was the problem? Why couldn’t he seem to move beyond these challenges? Soon he discovered the root of his financial challenge—his beliefs. He realized that he grew up with negative messages about money. These negative beliefs about money affected his ability to enjoy a prosperous life and caused him to live with constant financial struggles.

Know that your old beliefs may not come to you automatically. Sometimes an old belief will come to your consciousness when you see that you have repeated a pattern or a behavior that you did not want to repeat. It is at this time that you can stimulate it to consciousness and then decide if that particular belief serves you or not.

This experience of identifying your beliefs can bring up many feelings. Feeling your feelings is an important part of this exercise. When you feel your feelings, especially uncomfortable ones, you are identifying your beliefs. It is when we can identify them that we can choose to change them. The following steps will help you raise your beliefs to a conscious level and identify them. You may want to use your journal to write down your experiences.

1. Practice slowing down and experiencing quiet time. The goal of quiet time is to “be” rather than “do.” One idea is to take the time to slow down and enjoy your surroundings—enjoy the sunrise, the sound of the ocean, birds soaring, the beauty of nature. Practice slowing down and experiencing quiet time several times throughout the day on a regular basis. This exercise is not only important for beliefs to surface but is important to maintain a desirable level of living.

2. After you enjoy quiet time, ask your beliefs to be revealed to you. Ask yourself, “What do I believe about myself and my life?” “What beliefs do I have that are helping me or hindering my progress?” “What beliefs result in me repeating patterns that I do not want to repeat?” Ask yourself other questions unique to you. Write down the thoughts that come to you. Let your thoughts flow. Allow yourself to feel whatever feelings surface along with your beliefs. Expect to feel feelings while you do this exercise. Sometimes painful feelings and memories will surface during this part of the exercise.

3. Look for situations in your past that have memories attached to them. What did your mother or father use to say to you as a child that you now believe about yourself, your circumstances, or your life? My mother told me that children should be seen and not heard. So for many years, in my personal and professional life, I didn't have a "voice," per se. I didn't think that what I had to say was important. I changed this belief to "My voice is valuable and I am worthy to be listened to and heard."

Repeat these steps as often as necessary until you feel that you can identify what your beliefs are. Once you feel that you have raised your beliefs to a conscious level, proceed to the next section. I have worked with many clients who realized that their entire set of beliefs, or belief system, came from others—mostly family members. Know that the beliefs revealed to you may not be yours. They may only be what you were taught and ultimately believed. These old beliefs have made people believe they are lazy, not worthy, not smart, not capable, and the list goes on. We have the power and ability to change our old beliefs.

Write your old beliefs and your new beliefs about money. Your old belief is the belief that you either learned or were raised to believe. Your new belief is what you are aspiring to believe.

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Write your beliefs about success and failure. What does success mean to you? What does failure mean to you? Does success mean having security? That is what Gina believed. Gina's mother told her that having security was important in life. Security meant getting a good job that would provide health insurance. When Gina was in her twenties, she acted on her mother's belief system. She got a job with health insurance so she would feel secure and thus be successful. The problem was that Gina didn't feel successful, even though she had her mother's sense of security. She challenged this belief about security because she realized that no job was secure. Gina changed her belief of what security and success meant. For her, security and success is being her own boss. She left her job and started a business while in her early thirties, and bought her own health insurance.

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Write your old beliefs about yourself and the new beliefs that you choose to replace your old beliefs with. This can be a tough exercise because you are challenging your core beliefs—you are challenging yourself. Is who you are what you believe? John believed that he was lazy and not worthy to have what he desired. He believed this at 40 years of age because it was what his mother used to tell him when he was a child. He completed all of the schooling to become a chiropractor and yet he believed he was lazy. His belief about not being worthy showed up in his inability to transition into being a full-time chiropractor. He worked 40 hours a week repairing golf carts—a job that was a far cry from being a chiropractor. John’s belief about being lazy affected his ability to move into the career he desired. He realized after doing this exercise that his belief about being lazy and not being worthy was an old belief and was not valid in his life as an adult. He replaced this belief with his truth, a belief that he enjoyed working hard on projects that he enjoyed and that he was a good chiropractor. Since changing his beliefs, John bought a chiropractor practice.

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Old Belief: _____

New Belief: _____

Your new beliefs play a vital role in moving you forward in your personal and entrepreneurial efforts. They are similar to affirmations in that you may not believe them yet but you know they are or will be true for you. Transfer your new beliefs on index cards and read them daily or put them somewhere where they will be visible to you. I used to write my new beliefs on Post-It notes and put them in my desk drawer so that when I opened my drawer, I was reminded of my new beliefs.

What will you do to congratulate yourself for completing a difficult exercise? Taking time for yourself is an important part of the entrepreneurial journey. Will you enjoy spending time with friends? Enjoy time alone doing one of your favorite hobbies?

My beliefs support me and my journey.

