

Your Beliefs and Your Expectations—Part 3

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You may be wondering, “What did I miss in parts 1 and 2?” If you’d like a copy of those articles contact me. Here’s a brief review.

Part 1 described the origins of your beliefs and expectations. Your perceptions of yourself come from your parents (when you were young), important others in your life (friends, bosses, family members, the media), and adjustments you’ve made in your adult life.

Part 2 addressed how leaders are likely deceived by their beliefs and expectations.

This week, we address how leaders can improve the limiting beliefs and expectations of the contributors in their organizations.

Obviously, the hiring process should be designed to reject individuals whose expectations and beliefs don’t align with the values of the organization. Sometimes, however, you inherit responsibility for an individual who somehow managed to slip through those filters.

First, you have to realize that only the individual can change his or her beliefs and expectations. The concepts the parents instilled will be there for life—unless the individual can recognize the impact and chooses to change it.

Further, you can’t control a person’s self-expectations, though you may be able to influence them. You can certainly influence the environment in which a person works. And you can observe the influence of others, such as a person’s co-workers.

You can also control the clarity and quality of expectations you have of the individual. Early in the relationship, establish expectations clearly and provide feedback frequently.

The expectations you generate and your enforcement of those criteria provide the entry point for addressing an individual’s limiting beliefs. It is very appropriate to point out the difference between what was expected and what was actually delivered—and why that difference is unacceptable.

Over time, if expectations are not met, it is your role to investigate and determine a reason. If you find a simple cause and can correct it, great. Otherwise, the problem may have its genesis in some limiting belief that may be hard to discover.

Most individuals are not able to articulate their beliefs and expectations. If you ask them, they’ll respond with what they think you want to hear. You’ll have to penetrate beyond this superficial description. And you’ll need the cooperation of the individual to do that.

If the person insists on maintaining an “I’m okay!” perspective and is unwilling to work with you, then continued employment depends on meeting your performance expectations.

If the person is willing to do some self-exploration, however, I encourage leaders to work with the individual. It may take several weeks of introspection and reflection before the individual starts to understand what is causing the low confidence or inadequate performance.

As the person is able to zero in on the limiting belief, together you can explore:

- How does the person currently benefit from holding this belief?
- What would the person lose in giving up this belief?
- What would the person gain by adopting a different belief?

These questions are not easy to answer, of course. Yet the clarity will come if you will ask supplemental thought-provoking, open-ended questions and the individual sincerely seeks understanding. By working together, the probability is high that performance will improve. Further, you will both know that you’ve contributed to a more satisfying career and life for the individual.

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