

A heart-shaped sun is positioned in the upper center of the image, glowing brightly against a dark orange and red sky. The sun's light reflects on the dark water below, creating a shimmering path that leads towards the horizon. The overall mood is serene and inspirational.

**Living a Courageously
Authentic Life**

**Lesson Two:
Identify and Release Limiting
Beliefs**

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“If you accept a limiting belief, then it will become a truth for you.”

~Louise Hay

Limiting beliefs can be the result of a learned response from your childhood, something specific to your culture, or even carried over from a past life. Similar to our roles and personas, our limiting beliefs are things that are usually impressed upon us at a young age. Done so with the best of intentions, our limiting beliefs, nevertheless, hold us back from living our lives to the fullest.

One famous example of a limiting belief is the running of a 4-minute mile. For many years, coaches and athletes thought it was impossible for a human to run a mile in less than four minutes. In 1954, athlete Roger Bannister ran a mile in less than four minutes...in effect, breaking a limiting belief that was held around the world. As soon as he did that, other athletes began running a mile in less than four minutes as well. The only thing that had been holding them back from running at that speed prior to that was the belief that they couldn't.

We reinforce our limiting beliefs by repeating them over and over again to ourselves and to others. They are shared with us by our families, our religion, our culture and our society about how things are “supposed” to be. When we ask why these things are the way they are, we may be told, “It has always been done this way.” Some examples of limiting beliefs in our lives could be that:

- You need to follow in your father's footsteps and work in the family business
- Our family lives in this area of the country
- To be considered successful, you need to own your own home by the time you are 35 years old
- People who do not share the same religion/race/culture as us are not trustworthy

As you can see, the first three limiting beliefs in this list aren't necessarily bad – if you truly feel that they align with the life you want for yourself. You may love the family business and feel happy everyday that you are working there. The community that you live in may fulfill every need you have and you can't imagine living anywhere else. And you may dream of owning your own home. But what if you feel pressured to work at the family business and it eats away at your soul every day that you go there? What if you secretly dream of living in Paris instead of the

community where the rest of your family lives? What if you have no desire to buy a house and instead want to have the flexibility that renting an apartment provides? Buying into and living these limiting beliefs would be holding you back from living a joy-filled authentic life.

Some limiting beliefs, such as the fourth one on the list, not only hurt our selves but also hurt others and should be examined closely as to why you believe that.

Limiting beliefs can go beyond what we learn from our families, religion, culture or society. We also create – and believe – our own limiting beliefs. For example, one limiting belief I hear over and over again from clients, friends and family is the belief of not being worthy of something. It can show up in many ways:

- I don't deserve this promotion (or other positive thing).
- I feel guilty doing this for myself.
- I feel like a fake - why would anyone think I am good at doing this?
- I can't accept this gift.
- So many people are better than I am.

If someone you loved and cared about sat down with you and said any to these things, would you agree with him or her? Of course not. You would point out all of the reasons why he or she was worthy. This is an example of a limiting belief that holds you back and prevents you for receiving gifts and blessings in life.

To live fully and authentically, we need to identify and release these limiting beliefs. As with our personas and roles, releasing our limiting beliefs may be difficult for us and for others to accept. Send love and blessings to others and to yourself as you go through this process.

Case story: Releasing a Limiting Belief

One of my clients came to me after being diagnosed with a serious illness. He was on the road to recovery, but wasn't making the process that he had hoped. We did a couple shamanic healing sessions, and during one of them I received a message that one of the core limiting beliefs that was holding my client back from healing and living a rich, fulfilled life was that he didn't love himself and he didn't feel worthy of anything good...including healing.

When I shared this message with my client, he sighed and said it was true. We talked about the belief and why he believed it (it stemmed from his childhood) and then discussed the validity of that belief. While he agreed mentally that the belief didn't make any sense, he struggled to internalize it in his heart.

We ended up spending three months working together to help him release this belief and replace it with a new mantra: *I love myself and am worthy of everything good*. We did a number of things, including:

- Having him really explore and feel the way his limiting belief held him back from happiness. He did some exercises with me where we imagined him employing that limiting belief in a number of different situations: at work when being considered for a new role, in a social situation when with friends, when shopping for something he wanted, etc. In each instance, we looked at the situation if it were him and also if it were one of his closest friends. He was able to clearly see how differently he was treating himself from how he treated and supported his friends.
- Creating and verbalizing daily his new mantra. He posted his mantra all over his house and work space to continually remind him his new belief and reality.
- Identifying small and then progressively larger ways that he could show love to himself and prove that he is worthy. Some small things included saying “I love you” to himself in the mirror daily and treating himself to a favorite fruit that was out of season (and therefore a little more expensive). We worked up to scheduling a vacation for himself that he never would have taken in the past, because he would have told himself that it was too expensive and he didn’t deserve the time away.

At the end of the three months, he summed up his progress this way: “For the first time in my life, I feel happy with who I am and what I am doing with my life.”

Taking Action

Set aside a couple hours (all at once or in smaller time blocks) and find a quiet place to respond to the following questions. Please be gentle with yourself as you do this. Some of the questions or your responses may bring up emotions or memories for you that may be uncomfortable or painful. If that should happen, take several deep breaths, remind yourself that you are at a different point in your life at this time, the past is past, and release the emotion or memory.

- 1) Make a list of potential limiting beliefs in your life
 - a) Spend several days observing your family members. What “family truisms” do you notice being said or expected?
 - b) Listen to the voice in your head. What is it saying to you when you try something new or begin to dream?

- c) Listen to yourself when talking with others. Are there times where you hear yourself saying things to negate an idea or thought that could be caused because of a limiting belief?
 - d) Ask close friends for their opinions. Have they noticed ways that you limit yourself?
- 2) Spend time with each limiting belief and answer the following questions.
- a) Allow yourself to fully feel the impact of your limiting belief. Think about what your life would be like if you lived the limiting belief every day. How does it affect your happiness? Your dreams? Now think about how your life could be if that limiting belief didn't exist. Do you feel hopeful? Joyful? If you feel fearful or doubtful, don't worry. Those are normal feelings when faced with change. Ask yourself what you fear or doubt. Really explore this – it will help you begin to release the limiting belief.
 - b) Is this belief a valid belief or a limiting belief? Why?
 - c) Why do I believe this limiting belief? What caused me to believe this?
 - d) If the belief is a limiting belief:
 - i) Look for an example of the opposite of the limiting belief. And then look for another, and another, and so on. Find as many examples as you can and then post them where you can see them frequently to remind yourself that it is possible
 - ii) Answer the following question: Why couldn't I <the opposite of the limiting belief>?
 - iii) Ask yourself if you are ready to change this limiting belief in your life.
- 3) Take action
- a) Replace the words of the limiting belief with a positive and opposite mantra. Anytime you catch yourself saying your limiting belief, stop and replace the statement with your mantra. Place post-it notes with your mantra around your house and workspace to remind you of your new belief.
 - b) Try something – a small step – that is in direct contradiction to your limiting belief. Go in with the attitude that you are going to do your best and succeed. You may be pleasantly surprised by the results!
 - c) Define the steps will you take to change each limiting belief that you are ready to change
 - i) Who in your family or friend circle may be concerned about these changes?

- ii) How will you handle their concern and remain true to yourself and your beliefs at the same time?
- 4) Be gentle and patient with yourself
- a) As you begin to replace and release a limiting belief, you will have some times where you continue to buy into that limiting belief. This is normal. You have spent many, many years believing in this limiting belief; it will take some time to fully release it. When you catch yourself falling back into that limiting belief, commend yourself for recognizing it, and then steer yourself back on course. You may want to set up some type of system so you can track how frequently this happens so that you can visually see changes in the number of times this happens and the length of time between occurrences.

Congratulations on completing Lesson 2! What special thing can you do for yourself to honor and reward yourself for the work you've done?