



# Getting Out Of Your Own Way

Finding and releasing unconscious blocks with EFT

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*For Karen, for more than words can say*

## **Acknowledgements**

The ideas in this book are based on or influenced by the work of Gary Craig, Bill O'Hanlon, Richard Bandler & John Grinder the creators of NLP and many others. I'm grateful to them for sharing their ideas so freely. Any mangling of their great work in this book is my fault not theirs.

The attendees of the EFT Café practice group who often find themselves trying out my various ideas and techniques.

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Finally, my deepest thanks to Karen for her continued and patient support, for which I am very grateful, and for her proofreading, for which you will be very grateful.

## **Disclaimer**

This is like the safety briefing that you get on an aircraft just before take off. It's not the most interesting stuff in the world, but it needs to be said just in case.

While Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) have produced excellent clinical results and are slowly gaining in scientific support they are not yet widely accepted as formally validated scientific techniques and thus must be considered experimental in nature with no guaranteed outcome in any individual.

Both practitioners and members of the general public must therefore take complete responsibility for their own use of these techniques.

All materials provided in this book are provided for informational or educational purposes only and are not intended to be, or serve as a substitute for, professional mental health treatment. If you are having emotional or mental health difficulties consult a qualified mental health or medical practitioner.

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## **A Word Of Caution**

These processes are simple and safe for most people to use to overcome their blocks and limitations. These blocks are distilled from our experience of life. If you suspect, or find, that your blocks and limitations are the result of intense negative experiences in early life or later traumatic experiences, or that starting to unpack them using the methods in this book causes you great distress or unease. Take those issues to an experienced mental health practitioner who can help you process the material in a safe way.

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I'd love to hear how you get on using these techniques please email me at [andy@practicalwellbeing.co.uk](mailto:andy@practicalwellbeing.co.uk)

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## Introduction

Welcome to **Getting Out Of Your Own Way**, a guide to uncovering and dissolving many of your hidden limiting beliefs and blocks - the unconscious saboteurs that stand in the way of your progress.

In this book you can learn simple processes to bring those limiting beliefs and blocks into awareness, then use Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) based processes to neutralise those blocks so that you can make the changes you want to make in your world.

The techniques in this book combine EFT and NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) approaches that I have developed in my own personal exploration of what gets in my way when I set out to achieve something. They are simple and practical. You don't need any advanced EFT or NLP training to make use of them, but you do need to know how to do EFT (if you have no experience of EFT you will find a brief introduction at the end of this book which will give you an understanding of the basics).

This book is for people who want to discover and change their limiting beliefs. It is suitable as a guidebook for therapists and coaches to help their clients explore what is stopping them, it is also useful for people who want a self-help guide to spotting and eliminating the blocks in their own progress.

### **Are You Dragging An Invisible Truck?**

Let's imagine that, like someone in a strong man contest, you are harnessed to an invisible 10 tonne truck.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, you have to drag this truck behind you and it is hard work.

Now, let's imagine that you want to go on a family picnic to the seaside.

It's a beautiful day, there's not a cloud in the sky and the fine beach is just a short distance away. But you are harnessed to this invisible truck and where you go, it goes.

There are two strategies you can take to going on your picnic.

## Strategy A.

You recognise it might be an effort so you start to train: working out on weights machines, eating high protein power foods. Bulking up your muscles for the struggle of getting you and the truck to the beach.

You know it's going to be tough so you start listening to motivational speakers giving you all the encouragement you need to smash through your resistance, power through your problems on the way to your glorious goal.

You spend time everyday visualising the happy faces of your family enjoying "fun in the sun" on a day out to the beach.

When you are ready, when you have prepared physically and psyched yourself up for the big day you and your invisible truck start out towards the beach.

It's a huge struggle. You (wo)manfully strain against the weight of the truck, pulling with all your might. Beads of sweat break out on your skin as you strain at the ropes. Slowly, painfully, you start to move in the direction you want to go. Your progress is slow, marked by grunts and curses.

If you are lucky you get to the beach physically and emotionally wrecked, or you give up, go home feeling beaten, drink an energy drink and start looking for another, even stronger, motivational recording.

## Strategy B.

You undo the harness, leave the truck behind, and walk down to the beach to enjoy a great day out.

So which approach would you choose?

Call me a slacker, but I would choose Plan B.

But there is a problem with Plan B.

If you are harnessed to an invisible truck that holds you back, you can't see the truck or the harness. You can feel the resistance and the struggle when you move towards your goals but you don't know what is causing it, or how to get over it. You may have been struggling like this for a very long time and now it seems that this is just the way things are.

If you could only see the truck and the harness you might be able to undo the buckles and get on with what you want to do without that painful struggle.

This book is about showing you how to uncover the invisible barriers to your progress and how to undo them using EFT. If you use these techniques it can be surprisingly easy to get free of that dead weight, or would you prefer to keep dragging your invisible truck around?

## **Why Did I Write This Book?**

I am a recovering procrastinator. I used to be a top class foot dragger. If there were ways for me to avoid doing things I would find them. I was a master at starting projects and then finding a way to have them fizzle out or limp along in a half-hearted manner. When I started my own business this “skill” became a disadvantage. I’ve been experimenting with ways to get out of my own way ever since.

This has been a long, slow process. I’ve read a lot of books, listened to a lot of recordings, attended seminars, workshops, NLP and EFT trainings. Out of this stew of influences I started to develop ways of identifying and working with my blocks.

After each success I got a little more room to maneuver and things got easier. As a result of several years of experimentation and progress I came up with the **Getting Out Of Your Own Way** method.

I use this approach for myself on every new project, because I am much more likely to finish what I start, doing the work without excessive stress or any of my old foot-dragging. Life is a lot easier for me and others who have attended the **Getting Out Of Your Own Way** workshops and applied the techniques.

## **What You Will Find In This Book**

This book will give you a step by step process for uncovering and resolving unconscious limitations and blocks, techniques for starting and completing your projects.

### **Chapter 1: The Resistance**

This chapter introduces us to 'The Resistance': all the blocking forces that stop us from getting where we want to go.

### **Chapter 2: What Do You Want?**

"Not only do we have to do things right, we have to do the right things". If you are going to work towards a goal then you need to be sure that it is a good one. This chapter discusses what you need in order to have a good goal, introducing a checklist that you can use to decide whether you are starting with the right thing for you.

### **Chapter 3: Meet The Blockers**

In this chapter we dig a little deeper into 'The Resistance' to look at two of the main blocks: fear and limiting beliefs.

### **Chapter 4: What Are Limiting Beliefs?**

This chapter goes into more detail about limiting beliefs, what they are and how we can spot them. We also learn how to find out how strongly you believe what you believe, an important skill that we will use later on.

### **Chapter 5: Two Ways To Stay Where You Are**

This chapter introduces a simple model of the ways we get in our own way: the "The Wall" - the blocks that stop us moving forward, and the "Tar Pit" - the blocks that keep us firmly in place.

## Chapter 6: How Many Ways Do I Block Thee?

This chapter examines limiting beliefs in more depth. The unconscious parts of us that don't want what we want, the old rules that get in the way, our beliefs about what is possible and what we are capable of, how deserving or worthy we are, our fears and anxieties and what we have unconsciously decided or expect.

## Chapter 7: Finding The Blocks

This chapter introduces us to the “anti-goal” and how to use it, and our goal, to discover the specific blocks that are getting in our way. This easy step by step process will give us an overview of our blocks and limits. It also introduces Project Zero a way of clearing the resistance to clearing the resistance.

## Chapter 8: Unpacking The Blocks

This chapter uses the overview of our blocks as a starting point to drill down in a bit more detail to find out what is going on at a deeper level. In this chapter we go from the general outline of the resistance to specific tappable issues you can resolve with EFT.

## Chapter 9: Dissolving The Blocks

This chapter describes three specific EFT belief dissolving processes: the Simple Belief Neutraliser, The Belief Flip and Exception Tapping. Armed with these processes you can work on dissolving each of your blocks in turn.

## Chapter 10: It's Time To Get Moving

Clearing your blocks is not enough to realise your goals, you need to take action to make this happen. This chapter is about making a plan, listing what steps we need to take and taking care of any resistance that arises as we get close to doing what we need to do. We also learn the unexpected potential of the word “should” to stop us doing what we need to do, and how to neutralise unhelpful “shoulds”.

## Further Resources

Some suggested resources for further exploration of resistance, procrastination and how to overcome it.

## Summary Of Uncovering And Unpacking The Blocks

A quick step by step guide to the two processes for identifying our blocks.

## Worksheets

Printable worksheets for the processes described in the book.

## A Quick Introduction To EFT

A brief introduction to Emotional Freedom Techniques for people who are not yet familiar with EFT or 'tapping'.

## **How To Get The Best From This Book**

Read the book, pay attention to what resonates with you, do each of the exercises, pick a stalled project, locate the blocks and neutralise them. Rinse and repeat.

## **How Not To Get The Best From This Book**

Read the book. Do nothing! This process and these techniques will work for you, but only if you use them.

If you find yourself avoiding doing the work needed you might like to entertain the possibility that you are resisting taking undoing the resistance and check out Project Zero at the end of Chapter 7.

# 1: The Resistance

## Three Steps To Success - If Only!

In theory getting what we want should be a simple three-step process:

1. Choose what you want,.
2. Take steps to get there.
3. When you arrive celebrate the achievement of the goal.

If only it were that simple!

Apart from the real-world difficulties of making things happen: the work involved, resources required, the time taken and other people's cooperation, we often have blocks in our inner world that cause us to get in our own way.

If you find yourself getting in your own way then you have experienced 'The Resistance'.<sup>1</sup>

## The Symptoms Of Resistance

How do you know if you suffer from 'Resistance'? Here are some common symptoms:

- **Difficulty in making a start on a piece of work:** Do you find yourself constantly putting back your starting time and never actually getting going? Are you often waiting for the "right moment" to start or for inspiration to strike you?
- **Craving diversion:** Does the need to tidy your room, do the shopping, surf the internet and so on become irresistible whenever you contemplate getting down to work? Are you easily distracted from your work by friends and social opportunities?

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<sup>1</sup> Seth Godin has written elegantly about 'The Resistance' in his book [Linchpin](#)

- **Ineffective working:** Do you spend a lot of time at work but end up with little to show for it?
- **Last minute rushing:** Is all your work finally done at a breakneck speed the night before the final deadline? Do you often think you have not left yourself time to do things properly?
- **Missed deadlines** - Do you feel you are always asking for more time and making excuses? Are you losing opportunities and respect because you are always late?
- **Nagging guilt** - Is your time off relaxing spoilt by the continual feeling that you ought to be working? Do you often feel you have achieved less than you should have?
- **Disappointment and self-reproach** - Do you feel you are letting yourself down by putting things off? Do you think of yourself as lazy? Do you compare yourself unfavourably with others because of your procrastinating?

Do any of these apply to you?

## The Threads Of Resistance

In the story Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift, Gulliver is shipwrecked on the island of Lilliput by a violent storm. He washes up on the beach and awakes to find himself tied down by a network of fine threads. The Lilliputians, the tiny inhabitants of the island, have tried to secure the "giant" with their heaviest cables and ropes.

To Gulliver each rope is just like a cotton thread but together they hold him down and keep him stuck in place. We are in the same position, held in place by thousands of small threads of memories, beliefs and feelings.

Many of our difficulties are like this, interwoven threads that bind us, Using EFT and the techniques in this book we can begin to part those threads. Each thread that we break gives us a bit more room to manoeuvre, each step along the way makes the next step easier.

Gulliver could easily see and feel the threads that held him in place, but for us the bonds of our resistance usually stay hidden below the surface of our awareness.

One excellent way of bringing the resistance to the surface where it can be seen and acted upon is to start working towards a goal so that the resistance has to come to the surface to do the work of resisting your efforts. In this book we will use your goals to explore and release the resistance that gets in the way of your goals.

To do that you need a good goal.

## 2: What Do You Want?

*“He climbed the ladder of success only to find it leaning on the wrong wall”*

– Anon

If you are reading this book then you probably have some goals or projects in mind. Goals that are being blocked in some way.

If you are going to put the time, energy and money into a goal, it should be a good one. If you make plans to travel to Paris, book your travel tickets, save money for the trip, make the journey only to find that you really wanted to go to Rome, you will have made an expensive mistake. You did all the right things to successfully get to the wrong place.

A little time spent at the beginning of a project establishing that the goal you have chosen is right for you and has a good chance of success is time well spent.

### What Makes A Good Goal?

For the best chance of achievement our goal needs to meet some simple conditions:

1. **The goal is expressed in the positive.** We may pick many of our goals in response to something in our lives that we don't like. Perhaps we think we are too fat, we don't have enough money, we are lonely. In difficult circumstances it is easy to focus on the difficulties which are usually expressed in the negative. I want to lose weight, I want to quit smoking, I don't want to be on my own.

It's understandable that we talk about what we want in the future in terms of what we don't want now. However, knowing what we don't want is not the same as knowing what we want. For a realistic outcome we need to turn our attention to the future and what we want instead of our current lack.

To have a successful goal our don't wants need to be expressed in terms of what we do want. I want to lose weight can become I want to be slim, I don't want to be on my own could become I want to find my life partner. If we want to get

somewhere else it is useful to have the destination in mind before we set out. Just moving away from what we don't want could take us anywhere.

2. **The goal needs to be specific.** If you are running a half marathon, the finishing line is at the end of a specific 13 mile route. The only way to complete the marathon when the starting gun goes off is to run the route and cross the finishing line. Running just six miles won't bring you to your goal. Running 13 miles in the wrong direction won't bring you to your goal either.

To reach your goal you need a clear idea of where and when it will be and what it will look like when you get there. Where are you going, what will you see, hear and feel when you get there?

3. **Is the goal under your control?** Do you have some influence on the achievement of the goal? If your goal is for it to be a sunny day for your picnic next Wednesday, then there is very little you can do to personally guarantee that. If your goal is to have a great time regardless of the weather then that goal is much more under your control.
4. **How does your goal impact the people in your life?** Very few of us live alone on a desert island. Most of us have family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues. How will this goal impact on them? If your goal works for you but causes them problems then these problems are likely to become problems to you. Can you design your goal to have most benefit for the important people in your life?
5. **Is it your goal?** Is what you want, what you want? Do you want this because somebody else wants it. Are you being forced or encouraged into a goal that is good for someone else but means little to you. If your goal is to meet someone else's wishes which don't match your own then there are ample opportunities for sabotage and failure. If you can't commit to the goal then you will have problems achieving it regardless of any blocks.

## Examples Of Goals

**I want to lose weight:** This goal is expressed in the negative – wanting to lose weight – attention is on what is not wanted and not what is. I want to be slim is a better goal. Then the question becomes how slim? What weight, what dress size, etc.

**I want to get fit:** This goal is expressed in the positive, it gives a direction to go in. The goal needs to be a bit more specific. What does fit mean to you? How will you know when you are fit? What will you see, hear and feel that lets you know that you are fit.

**I want to win the lottery:** This is a very popular goal that is doomed to failure to the vast majority. You have zero control of the outcome. The only way to have any kind of influence is to buy a ticket, beyond that you are up against however many million people also buy tickets. The odds are not in your favour. In fact you will make a fortune much more quickly by investing the money you spend on a ticket in a savings account. It would take a long time but at least your outcome is under your control.

**I want to run a marathon on Sunday:** If you are a trained athlete at marathon running then you may be able to do this. If you are an overweight, couch potato who gets out of breath walking to the fridge then this is an unrealistic goal. It's easy to want a quick fix but some goals take as long as they take. Nine women can't make one baby in a month however hard they try.

If your goal is well thought out and fulfils these conditions then there is a good chance it can be achieved. If it is a good goal and you are still struggling with it then there is reason to believe that you are getting in your own way.

## The Magic Of Thwarted Success

If you have been struggling to achieve your goal it might be very hard to see how a thwarted goal could be any use to you whatsoever.

The value of a thwarted goal is it can be used as a light to uncover the hidden reasons for our difficulties. The limiting beliefs and blocks do not often show themselves. Using a thwarted goal you can flush them out into the open.

Once you know what your hidden blocks are you can go to work on them with EFT or whatever other tools you have at your disposal.

The next chapters will help you find out how you are blocking yourself.

## Exercise - What Do You Want?

Write down your goal. Answer each of the questions and make any necessary adjustments.

Is it stated in the positive?

What specifically is the goal? (Where, when, with whom?)

How will you know when you have it?

Is the goal under your control?

How does your goal impact the people in your life?

Is your goal really your goal?

## 3: Meet The Blockers

In this section we will meet two different sorts of blocks – fear and limiting beliefs. Fear is designed to serve the useful purpose of keeping us alive from one day to the next by helping us avoid danger. Beliefs (including limiting beliefs) give us quick ways of interpreting our environment, making decisions and taking action. When these important systems are out of balance or working on faulty assumptions we slow down. It's as if the cruise control of our car gets stuck on 15 mph.

### What Are You Afraid Of?

*“We have nothing to fear but fear itself”*

*– Franklin D Roosevelt*

It's been a long time since life started on Earth. In all that time, living organisms have had to tread carefully to survive. Many, many generations of surviving against hardship and predators have honed our brains to be very alert towards danger. When trouble arises we pay it a great deal of attention and devote a lot of resources to getting out of danger.

Our innate response to dangerous situations is fear. As humans we have very well-developed fear systems. With fear we can respond to threats very quickly and be ready for flight, fight or freeze behaviour.

Very few of our fears are instinctual, most of our fear responses are learnt as we go along. If we survive a dangerous situation part of our brain makes a rough note of the circumstances, whenever similar circumstances arise our brain warns us of danger by putting us on psychological and physiological alert. That's a fancy way of saying that we can learn to be afraid of what we think is dangerous.

This pattern matching process and fear response is out of our conscious control or awareness. Whenever we encounter situations like the one in which we previously felt the danger the pattern will be matched and adrenaline will flood the system preparing us for action whether we want it or not.

Fortunately, this threat detection system, the smoke alarm of the brain, is very quick to learn. We don't need to study the dangers of the situation we are in and decide what we need to remember - to spend that much time thinking about whether the large animal running towards us with fangs bared is dangerous or not - would lead to our destruction. The process is automatic, unconscious and very powerful.

Unfortunately the system is not very discriminating. Situations that would not be very dangerous are sometimes wrongly categorised as dangerous, so we can spend a lot of time being scared of things that are not life threatening at all.

These patterns of response are not very easy to update. The pattern matching and the response happen below the level of conscious thought. Once the fear response is learnt it can be very hard to neutralise this by thinking. If you have ever tried to talk yourself or someone else out of a phobia you will know that it is quite difficult to make progress against an entrenched fear whether it is justified or not.

This system, which assumes that next time will be just like the last time and prepares us for action is a quick and simple process, admirably suited to life in the wild where split-second reactions could mean the difference between life and death. In modern times with a huge variety of experiences available it begins to show its weaknesses.

Not only do we have a much more varied world, we also have the power of memory and imagination. By using memory and imagination we can create scenarios in our minds that have the power to threaten us and provoke the fear response even though they are not real.

## **Learning How To Be Afraid**

Imagine that you have a fear of public speaking. When you were seven years old, your teacher brought you to the front of the class to speak. You made a mess of it and were ridiculed by the teacher and your classmates. Although that is not really a life threatening situation our brains record the threat to our wellbeing and standing in the group and record that as a dangerous situation. As far as the brain is concerned that is just as threatening as a physical emergency.

As an adult when you are invited to speak to a group of people, your brain will anticipate another humiliation (whether that is a realistic possibility or not) and have a fear reaction. You won't be able to talk yourself out of it. The part of your brain that does talking and thinking is not the part of your brain that is afraid.

In the past you had two choices if you had one of these fear responses - you could tough it out, or run away. Now we have access to new methods of fear resolution, including EFT, that can interrupt the stress response to the trigger.

Using EFT we can break the old connection between the pattern matching and the fear response. Without the old response we can evaluate the 'dangers' of the situation accurately and respond in better ways. This is a huge step forward for our individual freedom. We don't need to be inhibited by the brain's over-developed ability to code situations as trauma.

If an outcome, or the consequences of an outcome, have some aspect that provoke a fear response (consciously or unconsciously) you may shy away from it. Uncovering and neutralising these fear responses will help you get to where you want to go.

Taking care of the fears around a goal is part of dissolving the resistance. The other part of our resistance is our limiting beliefs, faulty rules and thinking that we have adopted along the way.

## It's All In Your Mind

*"We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world."*

– The Buddha

It is surprising to find out that we don't live in the world, but in our ideas of the world. As infants we start to make sense of our world. Working out how things work and what they mean. These learnings form our beliefs and expectations about the world. As we grow older we rely more and more on our beliefs to guide us in our behaviour, we pay less and less attention to what is actually going on in the world around us.

## What Are Beliefs?

A belief is an idea about your experience that you hold to be true. Such an idea guides your actions, filters your experience, gives or denies you permission to act and lets you know what things mean.

## Beliefs vs Facts?

It is a fact that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. It happens with such regularity that you can set your clock by it.

The Ancient Greeks believed that Apollo the sun god drove the fiery sun through the sky on a chariot.

In the medieval period people believed that the earth was in the centre of the universe and the sun travelled through the heavens around the earth.

Now, most people believe that the Earth rotates and gives all of us standing on its surface the impression that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West.

In all cases the facts of the case are the same, the sun rises and sets, but the explanations: what causes the apparent motion and what it means are quite different.

## Four kinds of beliefs

In general there are beliefs about causation, meaning, boundaries and identity.

### **Causation**

These are our beliefs about what causes what.

For example:

- Apollo causes the sun to move across the sky on his fiery chariot.
- If I speak up I can influence events and get what I want
- If I speak up I will be humiliated
- I can't do this because I am too old.
- The MMR vaccine causes autism

## **Meaning**

These are beliefs about what things mean

For example:

- The sun going around the earth means that we are at the centre of the universe.
- An argument means the end of our relationship
- An argument is a sign of how healthy our relationship is in that we can disagree.
- Success is hard
- Withholding vaccination is criminal

## **Boundaries**

What is or isn't possible for the world, our behaviours and our capabilities

For example:

- There aren't enough customers to make this work.
- Speaking up is dangerous
- No one will be interested in what I have to say
- Everyone ignores me

## **Identity**

Beliefs about ourselves, who and what we are and what we are capable of. These beliefs almost always start with 'I ...'

For example:

- I am capable
- I am able to do this
- I'm no good
- I am not good enough
- I am a bad person
- I don't deserve success

These are just general categories and there is some overlap between them. It's not so important to learn their names, it is useful to recognise that we are embedded in a wide range of beliefs that guide our understanding of the world and our place in it.

Sometimes these beliefs are useful and sometimes they are not. When they work for us and bring us what we want we can think of them as empowering beliefs.

When they work against us they can get in the way of our progress and make life much harder than it needs to be. In these cases we call them limiting beliefs and this book is about dissolving limiting beliefs so that you can go on to reach your goals without internal interference. We will explore different limiting beliefs more thoroughly in the next chapter.

Beliefs are often more powerful than the facts. Many people will defend a belief in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

## Vaccination – Saint Or Sinner?

Many people believe that the MMR vaccine causes autism. This belief causes parents to act in a way that seems to them to be for the safety of their children. They will 'protect' their child by not vaccinating them. To parents with these beliefs, the companies who make the vaccines and the doctors who administer them are either evil or stupid, putting their children at risk of a serious mental disability.

To parents and doctors who believe in the value of vaccination and are confident that vaccines are safe, withholding vaccination puts your child at risk of infection from potential fatal diseases that have almost been eradicated. To these parents and doctors the people who deny their children vaccination because of fears about MMR and autism are either misguided or stupid to be putting their children at risk of infectious diseases.

If you reacted strongly to either of those descriptions of the vaccination issues it will be because your own beliefs (or writings on the wall as Gary Craig would call it) were triggered.

What is important in this example are not the facts themselves but that our understanding of the facts guides our behaviour and shapes our understanding of the world.

Our beliefs will permit or deny some kinds of behaviour, telling us what things mean and therefore how we should respond to them.

## 4: What Are Limiting Beliefs?

Rather than decide whether a belief is right or wrong it is more useful to consider whether it is helpful or unhelpful, limiting or enhancing.

A limiting belief is a belief that in some way restricts or limits the person who holds it.

### Qualities of a limiting belief

- **It's a description** - superficially at least a limiting belief is simply a description of the world as it appears to the holder. "I am not good enough" describes their world as it appears to them. If they have had the belief for long enough it is simply a true statement for them.
- **It's a prescription** - a limiting belief prescribes what can or can't be done. Most behaviour has to be consistent with the description. The description (from the past) guides the behaviour and thoughts in the present and the future.
- **It's an unconscious filter** - at an unconscious level the belief filters out anything that contradicts it. You have probably all had the experience of buying a new car and noticing for the first time just how many of them are about, you hadn't noticed them before you bought your car and now they are everywhere. Your filters have been set to notice them.

In the same way having a belief filters out the dis-confirming evidence. If you believe that you are not good enough you will ignore any evidence that you are good enough, contradictions to the belief will drop from consciousness, experience that confirms the belief will be at the front and centre of your awareness.

- **It is compulsive and resilient** - Because experience is filtered through the belief and behaviour is guided by the belief. Experiences tend to back up the belief, it becomes a self reinforcing system. Over time it moves from being a rule of thumb to being your reality.

- **It is often a mantra** - a familiar phrase that repeats itself in or out of consciousness - a kind of unhelpful affirmation. A negative phrase repeated again and again to remind you about what's 'true' in your experience.
- **It is usually invisible to the holder** - many limiting beliefs are almost completely invisible to the holder. They are so familiar and 'true' that they are just the way the world is. Like a fish not noticing the water, the holder is unaware of what is going on.

This is why having a guide or therapist is so useful. What is invisible to us can be easily spotted by someone who doesn't entertain the same belief.

## How To Spot A Limiting Belief

*There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, "What the hell is water?"*

– David Foster Wallace

Sadly it is much easier to spot other people's limiting beliefs than our own. What sticks out a mile in someone else's speech is completely missed by us when we say it because our beliefs are just the way things are.

However, if you listen out for typical belief statements you will begin to hear certain common forms of beliefs. We will be tackling these various forms using EFT.

Some phrases that may indicate a limiting belief:

- I can't ...
- I must / mustn't ...
- I should / shouldn't ...
- I am ...

- I am not ...
- Everybody ...
- Nobody ...
- Always ...
- Never ...

There is one very powerful class of beliefs called Identity Beliefs, these are we have about ourselves. In general they are very powerful and very persistent beliefs.

For example:

*“I am exhausted”*

*“I feel exhausted”*

These are saying the same thing aren't they? No, not at all. If you have a feeling – exhausted, weary, sad, angry. This is very different from being that feeling: I am exhausted, weary, sad, angry.

Feelings come and go, tiredness, sadness, anger etc are all feelings. It is the nature of a feeling to pass, feelings come and go in our experience. However our identity stays with us through time. If I am exhausted, there is a fair chance that I will be exhausted tomorrow, or the day after that. You have probably met people who tell you that they are exhausted, depressed, sad day after day. This feeling has some how become an identity.

This is why tapping on “I feel sad” brings quick and lasting results, whereas tapping on “I am sad” will probably only bring limited or temporary relief.

## How Do You Know How Much You Believe Something?

“How much do you believe X?” is a strange question. We are not normally asked to give our beliefs a score on some truth scale. If we believe something strongly it is self evident that it is true. We don't normally need to ask ourselves how true something is. Our system works for us, or not, regardless of whether we are consciously aware of it.

However, if we are going to work on neutralising limiting beliefs we need to have some way of deciding whether we believe something or if it is just a 'bunch of words'.

One convenient way to measure the 'validity of a belief' is to use the Validity Of Cognition (VOC) scale.

Say the belief statement out loud and give it a score from 0 to 10 on how true the belief feels. The score must be on how true the belief feels, some belief statements might be quite illogical from a rational point of view but still have an emotional charge.

If you are not used to evaluating the strength of your beliefs use the exercise below as practice for this useful skill.

## Exercise - Testing Beliefs

If you are not used to testing the strength of beliefs using the VOC scale. Try these examples for a sense of how it works.

Repeat the following sentences out loud and score how true they feel from 0 to 10 (where 0 is completely false and 10 is completely true).

My name is [ your name]

My name is Napoleon Bonaparte

I live at [ your address ]

I live in the White House

I am [ your age]

I am one hundred and twenty three years old

Remember, when testing beliefs the VOC score is how true the belief feels not how logical it is.

Remember there are no 'right' or 'wrong' responses to these questions. The truth score of the belief is just information. As we tap on each of the beliefs we can check to see if we are making progress neutralising it.

## **5: Two Ways To Stay Where You Are**

Let's imagine for a moment that you want to take up an exercise program. You have been living a sedentary life and your waistline is expanding. Sometimes you can be found sitting in front of the TV with a bowl of snacks and a beer watching, or snoozing, your way through the evening.

You would like to be eating carefully, taking five mile runs or working out at the gym but something stops you from doing that. You are piggy in the middle, pulled back to recliner and pushed away from putting on your running shoes. You are stuck between a tar pit and a wall.

The tar pit (sometimes known as your comfort zone) draws you back to the easy life of TV, snacks and beer, after all, it's called a comfort zone for a reason.

The wall, made of the blocks and limiting beliefs to getting started, stands between you and your running shoes or a couple of hours at the gym.

The tar pit and the wall will exist in every project or goal that you struggle with, holding you back and blocking your way.

Sometimes the resistance to completing a project will be 90% tar pit and 10% wall at other times it might be 20% tar pit and 80% wall. The amounts will vary from project to project and person to person.

The tar pit and the wall are usually invisible to us. They exercise their pulling and blocking with great force but we are often blind to their existence. In future chapters we will make them visible, then give you tools to work to fill in the tar pit and dismantle the wall.

Once we remove the wall and tar pit then moving forward is a simple matter of just doing it. Of course, the "simple" matter of just doing it might not be simple or easy, but at least you will have yourself as an ally not an opponent.

The tar pit and the wall may be only a few limiting beliefs and apprehensions and easily dissolved with just a few rounds of EFT, but typically there are many interlaced limiting beliefs and fears in the tar pit and the wall.

When they are uncovered it's possible to feel discouraged or even overwhelmed, but you can console yourself by remembering:

- Each block removed is one step closer to freedom
- Each block or limitation removed gives you a little more “wiggle room” with from the threads that hold you down, and will let you progress further in your project.
- Because the blocks revealed are very specific they can be addressed more easily and with greater efficiency than with generic tapping.
- Some of these blocks and limitations will operate across different projects, so removing them from one project will likely diminish their power in other areas of life so you might get much more benefit than you first imagine.

## The Wall - Blocking The Way Forward

When anyone tells you about their problem, they will tell you about the circumstances and a collection of feelings that goes with it. If the feelings were pleasant and enjoyable they wouldn't call it a problem. The problem is that the feelings are unpleasant and/or cause them to behave in ways that don't help them.

Our feelings play a very important part in our lives. They give our experience colour and meaning. They help us decide what is good and bad, pleasant or unpleasant. They motivate or inhibit us. We try to get to what we enjoy or to avoid what we dislike.

Our feelings become guides to making sense of our experience and direct our behaviour.

Very strong feelings can be associated with memories, especially traumatic memories.

These feelings and responses can be triggered by seemingly innocuous sights, sounds, smells or other sensations.

Memories don't have to be traumatic with a capital 'T' to have an effect on our experience. Even mild experiences, arguments, disappointments, near misses can have a cumulative effect on our experience of the world.

*The night my father died, my sister called me at 4am to let me know he was very ill in hospital. The phone was in my home office and being a deep sleeper I missed the call.*

*In the morning the answer phone light was blinking and I picked it up to hear a very distressed message from my sister about having to go into hospital.*

*When I got the message there was nothing I could realistically do. I lived 250 miles away and could not have got to the hospital in time. For a couple of hours no one answered the phone at my sister's house and I had to wait for her to call me back when they got back from the hospital after my father had died.*

*I noticed a few months later (but did not make the connection) that every time I saw the blinking red light on my answer-phone that I felt uncomfortable, that I really didn't want to hear the message.*

*I did not understand at the time that my brain had linked the blinking red light to the feelings of that night. What had previously been an innocent flashing light now triggered some of those unpleasant feelings.*

From our life experiences we learn how the world operates and who we are in that world. These learnings are encapsulated in beliefs, rules of thumb that help us make sense of the world.

These beliefs about meaning, cause and effect, and ourselves exert a powerful influence on our experience and behaviour.

If we were lucky in our early life we learn supportive beliefs, "the world is safe", "I am a good person", "You can trust people". Some people are not so lucky and learn other things - "The world is dangerous", "I am a bad person", "No one can be trusted" and so on.

*"We live in a Palace of Possibilities.*

*It is an ever expanding structure and is filled with awesome rooms and annexes that are loaded with achievements and joy. These rooms are open to everyone, although most of us only visit a few of them. It's not that we are barred from any of the rooms. ... Rather, it's that we choose to dwell only in those rooms within which we are comfortable. Somehow, we don't "belong" in those other, more expansive rooms. ... We stay within the familiar (our comfort zones) and don't venture beyond the walls (limits) of the rooms we have chosen. Why? Because our cans and can'ts are written on those walls and we obey those dictates as though they were real ... there is scarcely any part of our makeup that is not affected by what's written on those walls.*

*The words on our walls are metaphors for our self talk, of course. They represent the attitudes, opinions & beliefs that we have accumulated over the years. Many of them are hand-me-downs from our parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, religion, peers, books, TV and an endless list of other "authorities" in our lives. Upon inspection many of them are laughable. Nonetheless, they still seem to have a hold on our progress.*

*We all have different words on our walls. That's why we appear to have different limits. Your limits are different from mine because the "truths" written on your walls are different from the "truths" written on mine. However, they are not really "truths" at all. They are just the guidelines we have adopted for getting through life--AND--many of them are fictions. They are hand-me-down beliefs that were written on our walls by others and we have been dutifully obeying them ever since. This need not be. "*

*- Gary Craig*

The walls between us and our outcomes are built of these beliefs and emotional responses. They are the web of meanings and responses that hold us back from making the changes we want to.

## **The Tar Pit - The Dark Side Of The Comfort Zone**

*Mohini was a white tiger who lived for many years at the Washington, D.C. National Zoo. For most of those years her home was in the old lion house - a typical twelve-by-twelve foot cage with iron bars and a cement floor. Mohini spent her days pacing relentlessly back and forth in her cramped quarters. Eventually, biologists and staff worked together to create a natural habitat for her. Covering several acres, it had hills, trees, a pond and a variety of vegetation. With excitement and anticipation they released Mohini into her new and expansive environment. But it was too late. The tiger immediately sought refuge in a corner of the compound, where she lived for the rest of her life. Mohini paced and paced in that corner until an area twelve by twelve feet was worn bare of grass.*

*- Tara Brach, Radical Acceptance*

In the natural world all animals want to stay safe. They build their dens or nests and return there to take refuge from life's challenges. People are no different. We like to have safe places where we can return and feel comfortable.

In the emotional world our safe places are known as our comfort zone, where we feel safe and secure away from the battering of life.

Each person's comfort zone will be different, since we are molded by our experience, we can take refuge in very different comfort zones (which to an outsider may not look very comfortable at all).

For example:

- The pupil who always stays in the back of the class and refuses to speak up because when they do, they are ridiculed. They prefer safety in silence.
- The tourists who only go on holiday to places where the locals can speak English.
- The worker who stays in the same old boring job because it's less stressful than looking for work and going to interviews. (This kind of comfort zone is disappearing as jobs for life are becoming a thing of the past).
- The woman who stays in an abusive relationship because that is 'safer' for her than being alone in an uncertain world. At least in this situation she knows what to expect and how to live with it.

Some of these comfort zones may be recognisable to you, some may be hard to take. Our comfort zones are unique to us and our experience.

*"For some people better the security of misery than the misery of insecurity."*

*- Prof Charles M Devonshire*

Inside the comfort zone nothing much changes and there are fewer risks to take than in the world at large.

If we have been in our comfort zone for a long time it can become so familiar as to be almost invisible. The origins of the comfort zone and why we like it there are lost in the mists of time.

On the face of it a comfort zone is a good place to be. Known, safe, comfortable, but if you want to leave it and find something better it can have a strong pull on you and want to draw you back.

If you try to leave your comfort zone you have to face what your comfort zone is comforting you from.

The unfamiliarity of a new life. If you have tried new things or ventured out of your comfort zone then a lot of what you will experience will be unknown to you. Many people equate the unknown to danger. Leaving the comfort forces you to face real or imaginary dangers.

You may also risk the disapproval from other people in your comfort zone who don't want you to move on. Family and friends who would like you to stay where you are because changing what you do and achieve will threaten their security.

For all these reasons our comfort zones exercise a strong pull on us when we want to do anything different. Which is why I prefer to call them a tar pit.

Your tar pit may be big or small, shallow or deep, slippery or very sticky, whatever it is it will hold you back from achieving what you want to.

## 6: How Many Ways Do I Block Thee?

This chapter describes some of the kinds of things that make up our wall. Any wall in the real world is made of bricks, rocks or blocks. Likewise, inner walls are built from different kinds of beliefs and limitations.

### Not Wanting What You Want

To have a good chance at meeting your goal you need three things:

1. You have to want it.
2. You have to decide to do what you need to do to get it
3. You have to set out with the expectation that you will get it

If there are problems with any of these pieces then you will find it harder to reach your goal.

### You don't want it

What if part of you wants the goal or outcome but another part of you doesn't want it?

- You want to move to somewhere new, but a part of you doesn't want to leave your community.
- You want to become slim and healthy but you don't want to attract lots of unwanted attention from members of the opposite sex.
- You want to ... but ...

Sometimes the part of you that doesn't want to do it may be hidden below the surface or forced below the surface by the part of you that does want it.

The part of you that doesn't want to do it will probably put barriers in your way to try to get its needs met.

Taking care of the concerns of the parts of us that don't want to achieve the outcome can either get them on board or demonstrate that the goal isn't right for all the parts of you that have a stake in it. On the face of it, it might be a blow that so many parts of you don't want to do what your conscious mind wants to do. Coming to an arrangement that satisfies all parts of you is much better than struggling against yourself and failing to get where most of you doesn't want to go.

## Deciding Not To Do It

When we decide to do something we commit ourselves to take some action. A decision is the bridge between an idea and action.

If you are thirsty and you want a drink, you may be thirsty for some time before you decide to get up and get a glass of water. Until you decide, the getting a drink is just an idea - nothing has happened in the world yet.

Some decisions, like getting a drink, are conscious but some are not. Whether the decision is conscious or not the result will be the same. If you have decided at some level not to do something you will find yourself putting it off even if at another level you want to do it.

When we decide we start to take steps towards our goal.

*"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back-- Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth that ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."*

– W H Murray, *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition*

What if at some level you have decided not to reach your goal? For reasons that are hidden from you, part of you has decided not to do that. When you start moving towards your goal, you will have resistance from the part of you that wants to go in the opposite direction.

Uncovering and resolving unconscious decisions is an important part of getting out of our own way.

## Expecting To Fail

An expectation is our own private preview of the future. It's how we imagine the world will play itself out. Our expectations can be powerfully influential.

Imagine two equally talented applicants approaching a job interview, one with the expectation that she is going to make a good impression and succeed, the other with the expectation that the interview is going to be a disaster and that she will mess it up in some way. Which applicant do you think will have the best chance?

Once again our expectations can be conscious or unconscious, either way they can certainly exert a powerful influence.

If you are taking steps to achieve your outcome it is helpful to expect that you are going to succeed. Having a positive expectation of the results helps us keep going when the going gets tough.

Mohammed Ali famously expected to win his boxing matches, he was even confident enough in his expectations to predict the round of the match in which he would win.

On the other hand if we expect to fail or do badly, this gloomy view of the future will not inspire us towards greater efforts but will hold us back from making the effort. Dissolving negative expectations can help us keep going.

## Don't Break The Rules - Can't-s, Must-s and Should-s

*If you think you can, or you think you can't. You're right!*

– Henry Ford

When people say "I can" or "I can't" they are telling us the limits of what they think is possible for them in their world.

- I can't speak in public
- I can't fall in love

- I can't say that to my mother
- I can't leave this job
- I can't get out of this relationship

Each can't is a line in the sand which they can't cross. This line in the sand was probably formed long ago as a rule based on experience, it is usually held at an unconscious level, hidden from view. By now, the "I can't ..." is self-evident and convincing.

I must is ... an order from authority. I must do this or some consequence will occur.

I should is an expectation from outside about what is appropriate behaviour in any situation.

If you should do something it implies an expectation that others want you to do something.

As children our parents, teachers and others tell us what we should do and we learn what is important to the people who are telling us. Because we are kids we usually go along with these shoulds with varying degrees of resistance.

Most people don't like being told what to do - ask any 2 year old - and as children we put up what resistance we can to the instructions either as a flat refusal or some kind of foot dragging.

When we grow up and have things that we want to do, we can carry the language and experience of our childhood shoulds into our adult behaviour. We want to do something and we tell ourselves we should - do our accounts, mow the lawn, wash up, make that phone call. That's when the trouble starts. Whenever we describe a task in terms of "I should ..." then we set ourselves up to resist it whether we want to do it or not.

## Possibilities and Capabilities

*It's not possible to ...*

Possibilities are all about what the physical world will permit. Or more accurately what we think the physical world will permit.

We live in a world constrained by physical laws. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second, objects fall down under the influence of gravity. It's not likely that objects will travel faster than light, or that if you drop your keys they will fall upwards to the ceiling.

But there are many examples of things that were thought impossible that have now been done

- Many people have run a mile in less than four minutes
- Erik Weihenmayer, was the first blind man to climb Everest.
- Oscar Pistorius, a man with no legs competes successfully in international athletics

Before these had been done, most people would have said that they were impossible. They mistook their idea of what was possible for the truth.

*I am not capable of ...*

Capability is all about what we are able to do and what is possible for us as individuals.

If you ever learned a musical instrument you probably had moments where you wondered if you were capable of doing it. You knew it was possible because lots of other people were playing those instruments, but you didn't know if it was possible for you.

When you learned to ride a bicycle or swim you may well have thought that you weren't capable of doing it, now you can think of yourself as a confident cyclist or swimmer, even though at the time it seemed daunting or even impossible.

The importance of dissolving our limiting beliefs about what's possible, or what we are capable of, is not to make everything possible in the world or ourselves capable of everything. It's probably not possible to bring back the dead, step foot on the sun or give birth to your mother. We are not capable of flying without mechanical help, running a 2 minute mile or living without oxygen. The limited world and our limited capabilities in it still exist.

However, it is worth working on those beliefs about possibility and capability so that we can be open to finding out what is possible and what we are capable of rather than deciding in advance.

## Deservedness and Worthiness

Deservedness and worthiness are moral concepts. As individuals, families and cultures we 'decide' what we and others deserve. If we were to say that “tigers dont deserve their stripes” or “trees aren't worthy of their leaves” we would recognise that as being a strange way of thinking.

But worthiness or deservedness are very powerful concepts for humans. We might think that some people don't deserve their success or are not worthy of our approval. The media constantly uses our ideas of what is worthy or deserving to criticise or defend points of view or groups of people.

If we think we are worthy and deserving, or unworthy and undeserving that will have a powerful effect on what is possible for us.

### Deservedness

*I don't deserve ...*

The definition of deserve is 'rightly earned or merited'. Deservedness is about whether or not we have 'earned' the right to have our goal. It's as if we have to do certain things that make it possible for us to get this goal.

You may have heard as a kid “you don't deserve any sweets you haven't tidied your room”. We learned that there was a link between what we wanted and what we did, if we didn't do what was required then we wouldn't have earned what we wanted. As adults we can still think that our deservedness for anything is dependent on arbitrary rules.

If you don't deserve something it is because you haven't done enough.

The messages of deservedness are often picked up in childhood.

How often were you told “You don't deserve *this* because of *that*” You can fill in the blanks.

Dissolving the false links between what you have or haven't done and what you can achieve will make it easier for you to do what you need to do to get what you want.

## Worthiness

*I am not worthy ...*

Worthiness is defined as “the quality or state of being eligible”.

If deservedness is to do with having done enough, worthiness is about being good enough.

If you are not worthy of something it is because you are not good enough.

If you believe this then there is nothing you can do to become eligible for what you want - how could you be a different person?

Worthiness has its roots in shame. If we were shamed as children then there is a strong chance that we will not feel worthy of what we want.

Undoing any links between our goal and who we are will make it much easier for us to work towards and get what we want.

## Fears and Safety

*I am afraid of ...*

*It's not safe to ...*

When we have specific fears we can answer the question "What are you afraid of? " directly.

- I am afraid of heights
- I am afraid of spiders
- I am afraid of being ridiculed
- I am afraid of failure

These fears are well known to us, we can articulate them or even explain them.

There are some fears that we are not consciously acquainted with, that lie below the surface of consciousness and make themselves known through our feelings.

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt uneasy, unsafe or afraid but couldn't identify what was going on that caused that response?

Some situations just feel unsafe to us, superficially, they may be very innocent situations that other people would find quite OK, but for us they are scary.

To eliminate the fear blocks to our progress we need to address both the specific and the vague fears that may stop us from taking action.

In the next chapter we will bring all this information together to create a process that lets you uncover the self-defeating patterns that are at work as you try to realise your goals

The complete e-book, paperback version, and extra materials for  
Getting Out Of Your Own Way are available from  
[www.practicalwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.practicalwellbeing.co.uk)

## About Andy Hunt



I'm a Master Practitioner and Trainer of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), and a Practitioner and Trainer of Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT). I've been practising NLP since 2000 and EFT since 2004. I'm a member of the Neuro Linguistic Psychotherapy and Counselling Association ([NLPTCA](#)) my professional body and follow their code of conduct. I'm also a member of the Association for the Advancement of Meridian Energy Techniques [AAMET](#)

Since leaving university (gasp!) 30 years ago, I've had a variety of jobs including: milkman, assistant steward on an Irish Sea ferry, Residential Social Worker at a centre for delinquent teenagers, Assistant Head of Youth Centre in Brixham, grape picker in Switzerland, spring grinder(!) in Germany, night porter, barman, software engineer, and now therapist and trainer living the North East of England.

I specialise in working with people who give themselves a hard time, judge themselves harshly, feel bad about themselves or spend far too much time having a problem with themselves.

I've been an undisciplined student of yoga for 20 years, and a practising Buddhist (meditating on and off) for 20 years.

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