

FM-PTS-09

SESSION 9

ROOT CAUSE AND CORE BELIEFS

12 Weeks to a Stronger You | Post Traumatic Strength

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THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, AND ROOT CAUSE

We have talked at length about the connection between thoughts and emotions. But why do certain thoughts arise in the first place? Why does one person experience a moment of criticism as a minor inconvenience while another experiences it as devastating? The answer lies in Root Cause — the deeper belief system that interprets events and assigns them meaning.

Root cause is the reason behind the reason. When you feel a sudden surge of shame in a meeting, the immediate trigger might be a comment from a colleague — but the root cause might be a deep belief that you are fundamentally not good enough. Identifying your root cause gives you real power to change patterns that have been running your life for years.

"Core beliefs are also known as Iceberg Beliefs. They are the most central ideas you have about yourself, other people, and the world — and most of them are hidden beneath the surface."

CATEGORIES OF CORE BELIEFS

Core beliefs tend to cluster around a few fundamental questions that all human beings grapple with:

- Goodness: Are people — am I — basically good or bad?
- Likability: Am I likable? Am I lovable? Do I deserve connection?
- Competence: Am I capable? Am I worthy? Can I handle life?
- Safety: Is the world a safe place? Can I trust others?

CATEGORIES OF CORE BELIEFS (CONTINUED)

Core beliefs can be positive, negative, or neutral. The problem is not that you have core beliefs — everyone does. The problem is when your core beliefs are inaccurate, harmful, or out of date — formed in a context that no longer applies to your life.

ORGANIZING YOUR BELIEFS INTO A MORAL CODE

The work of Session 9 is not just to identify your core beliefs, but to begin organizing them into a structure that gives you clarity and control. That structure is called your Moral Code, and it has three levels:

Core Beliefs (≤ 4 or 5): These are the deepest, most fundamental convictions about who you are and what matters. These are beliefs you would not compromise for any reason. They form the bedrock of your identity and your decisions. Because of how powerful they are, it is important to be intentional about them — to consciously choose the beliefs you want at your core, rather than unconsciously inheriting ones you never examined.

Convictions: These are beliefs you hold strongly "during a specific season of life." They are deeply felt, but you are willing to revise them if presented with compelling evidence or through significant life experience. Convictions are the working layer of your moral code — more flexible than core beliefs, but more committed than opinions.

Opinions: These are surface-level thoughts — things you have not thought deeply about or do not feel strongly about. Opinions are the most easily changed level of your belief system, and that is perfectly fine. Not every belief needs to be a conviction.

PRACTICAL STEPS

This week's homework is straightforward but not easy: think carefully about your core beliefs. What do you believe, at the deepest level, about yourself? About other people? About the world?

The strongly recommended practice is to write them down. Writing forces a kind of clarity that thinking alone does not. When your beliefs are on paper, you can look at them, evaluate them, and begin to decide which ones you want to keep and which ones need to be revised.

Next session will continue this work, helping you organize your beliefs into a coherent personal Moral Code that will serve as the foundation for the final weeks of this program.