Core Beliefs Inventory
(from Prisoners of Belief by Matthew McKay, Ph.D. and Patrick Fanning)

After each of the 100 statements that follow, circle T or F according to whether you think the statement is mostly true or mostly false. In cases where it’s a close decision, go with your first impulse. It is important to complete every item, circling the T or the F (but not both), in order to get an accurate score at the end. But this is not a test – there are no right or wrong answers, or better and worse ways to complete the inventory.

1. T  F  I am worthy of love and respect
2. T  F  My world is a pretty safe place
3. T  F  I perform many tasks well
4. T  F  I am in control of my life
5. T  F  I feel loved and cared for
6. T  F  I can rely upon myself
7. T  F  The world is neither fair nor unfair
8. T  F  I feel a strong sense of belonging in my family and community
9. T  F  Most people can be trusted
10. T  F  I set reasonable standards for myself
11. T  F  I often feel flawed or defective
12. T  F  Life is dangerous – a medical, natural, or financial disaster could strike at any time
13. T  F  I am basically incompetent
14. T  F  I have very little control over my life
15. T  F  I’ve never felt really cared for by my family
16. T  F  Others can care for me better than I can care for myself
17. T  F  I get upset when I don’t get what I want – I hate to take no for an answer
18. T  F  I frequently feel left out of groups
19. T  F  Many people would like to hurt me or take advantage of me
20. T  F  Very little of what I do satisfies me – I usually think I could do better
21. T  F  I feel OK about myself
22. T  F  I can protect myself from most dangers
23. T  F  Doing some things comes easy for me
24. T  F  I have the power I need to solve most of my problems
25. T  F  I have at least one satisfying intimate relationship
26. T  F  It’s OK to disagree with others
27. T  F  I accept it when I don’t get what I want
28  T  F  I fit in well with my circle of friends
29  T  F  I rarely need to protect or guard myself with other people
30  T  F  I can forgive myself for failure
31  T  F  Nobody I desire would desire me if they really got to know me
32  T  F  When I trust my own judgment, I make wrong decisions
33  T  F  Events just bowl me over sometimes
34  T  F  My relationships are shallow – if I disappeared tomorrow, no one would notice
35  T  F  I find myself going along with others’ plans
36  T  F  There are certain things I simply must have to be happy
37  T  F  I feel like an outsider
38  T  F  Most people think only of themselves
39  T  F  I’m a perfectionist; I must be the best at whatever I do
40  T  F  I have legitimate needs I deserve to fill
41  T  F  I am willing to take risks
42  T  F  I am a competent person, as capable as most people
43  T  F  My impulses don’t control me
44  T  F  I feel nurtured in my family
45  T  F  I don’t need the approval of others for everything I do
46  T  F  Things tend to work out, even in the end
47  T  F  People usually accept me as I am
48  T  F  I seldom feel taken advantage of
49  T  F  I set achievable goals for myself
50  T  F  I’m dull and boring and can’t make interesting conversation
51  T  F  If I’m not careful with my money, I might end up with nothing
52  T  F  I tend to avoid new challenges
53  T  F  I’m afraid of being abandoned – that a loved one will die or reject me
54  T  F  I don’t function well on my own
55  T  F  I feel I shouldn’t have to accept some of the limitations placed on ordinary people
56  T  F  People don’t usually include me in what they’re doing
57  T  F  Most people can’t be trusted
58  T  F  Failure is very upsetting to me
59  T  F  I count for something in the world
60  T  F  I can take care of myself and my loved ones
63  T  F  I can learn new skills if I try
64  T  F  I can usually control my feelings
65  T  F  I can get the care and attention I need
66  T  F  I like to spend time by myself
67  T  F  Most of the time I feel fairly treated
68  T  F  My hopes and dreams are much like everyone else’s
69  T  F  I give people the benefit of the doubt
70  T  F  I’m not perfect and that’s OK
71  T  F  I’m unattractive
72  T  F  I choose my old, familiar ways of doing things over risking the unexpected
73  T  F  I don’t perform well under stress
74  T  F  I’m powerless to change many of the situations I’m in
75  T  F  There’s no one I can count on for support and advice
76  T  F  I try hard to please others and I put their needs before my own
77  T  F  I tend to expect the worst
78  T  F  Sometimes I feel like an alien, very different from everybody else
79  T  F  I must be on my guard against others’ lies and hostile remarks
80  T  F  I push myself so hard that I harm my relationships, my health, or my happiness
81  T  F  People I like and respect often like and respect me
82  T  F  I don’t worry much about health or money
83  T  F  Most of my decisions are sound
84  T  F  I can take charge when I need to
85  T  F  I can depend on my friends for advice and emotional support
86  T  F  I think for myself, I can stand up for my ideas
87  T  F  I am treated fairly most of the time
88  T  F  I could change jobs or join a club and soon fit in
89  T  F  I’d rather be too gullible than too suspicious
90  T  F  It’s OK to make mistakes
91  T  F  I don’t deserve much attention or respect
92  T  F  I feel uneasy when I go very far from home alone
93  T  F  I mess up everything I attempt
94  T  F  I’m often a victim of circumstances
95  T  F  I have no one who hugs me, shares secrets with me, or really cares what happens to me
96  T  F  I have trouble making my own wants and needs known
97 T F Although my life is objectively OK, I have a lot of trouble accepting some parts that aren’t the way I’d like them to be

98 T F I don’t feel I belong where I am

99 T F Most people will break their promises and lie

100 T F I have very clear, black-and-white rules for myself

**Scoring**

This inventory assesses your core beliefs about the ten topics listed below. These topics are important areas of everyone’s life, about which everyone has some sort of belief whether it’s conscious or not.

To score your answers follow these instructions carefully:

1. **Value**
   
   __________ points
   
   Look at your answers for items 1, 21, 41, 61, 81. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 11, 31, 51, 71, 91. For each F circled, give yourself one point.
   
   Record your total points in the space above
   
   On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “I am worthy”. The higher your score, the more valuable you believe you are as a person.

2. **Security**
   
   __________ points
   
   Look at your answers for items 2, 22, 42, 62, 82. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 12, 32, 52, 72, 92. For each F circled, give yourself one point.
   
   Record your total points in the space above
   
   On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “I am safe”. The higher your score, the more safe you feel.

3. **Performance**
   
   __________ points
   
   Look at your answers for items 3, 23, 43, 63, 83. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 13, 33, 53, 73, 93. For each F circled, give yourself one point.
   
   Record your total points in the space above
   
   On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “I am competent”. The higher your score, the more competent you feel.

4. **Control**
   
   __________ points
   
   Look at your answers for items 4, 24, 44, 64, 84. For each T circled, give yourself one point. Now look at your answers for items 14, 34, 54, 74, 94. For each F circled, give yourself one point.
   
   Record your total points in the space above
   
   On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "I am powerful”. The higher your score, the more you feel in control of your life.
5. **Love**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 5, 25, 45, 5, 85. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 15, 35, 55, 75, 95. For each F circled, give yourself one point.  
Record your total points in the space above  
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*I am loved*”. The higher your score, the more you feel nurtured.

6. **Autonomy**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 6, 26, 46, 66, 86. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 16, 36, 56, 76, 96. For each F circled, give yourself one point.  
Record your total points in the space above  
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*I am autonomous*”. The higher your score, the more independent you feel.

7. **Justice**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 7, 27, 47, 67, 87. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 17, 37, 57, 77, 97. For each F circled, give yourself one point.  
Record your total points in the space above  
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*I am treated justly*”. The higher your score, the more likely you are to accept what you get in life as fair or reasonable.

8. **Belonging**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 8, 28, 48, 68, 88. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 18, 38, 58, 78, 98. For each F circled, give yourself one point.  
Record your total points in the space above  
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*I belong*”. The higher your score, the more you feel secure and connected to family, friends, acquaintances and humanity in general.

9. **Others**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 9, 29, 49, 69, 89. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 19, 39, 59, 79, 99. For each F circled, give yourself one point.  
Record your total points in the space above  
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement “*People are good*”. The higher your score, the more likely you are to trust others and to expect them to behave positively towards you.

10. **Standards**  
________ points  
Look at your answers for items 10, 30, 50, 70, 90. For each T circled, give yourself one point.  
Now look at your answers for items 20, 40, 60, 80, 100. For each F circled, give yourself one point.
Record your total points in the space above
On a scale of 1 – 10 this indicates how much you agree with the statement "My standards are reasonable and flexible". The higher your score, the more likely you are to judge your own and others’ actions compassionately.

To get a quick overview of your scores you can fill in the bar chart below. Colour in each bar starting at the bottom and extending up to your score for that category.

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Interpreting your scores
It is tempting to visualise the bars on this chart as the bars of a prison. The higher the bars, the more confined and restricted by your beliefs you may feel. The lower the bars, the more freedom and choices you may have in life.

But the Core Belief Inventory is just a guideline. It is designed to help you start to identify your core beliefs, not to pass judgment on them or on yourself. The inventory reveals how you see yourself in the world, based on your experiences. The result isn’t good or bad.

People who score high in agreement with the 10 basic belief statements may tend to have a greater sense of well-being than those who score low. But that isn’t the point. What matters is getting an honest sense of what you have come to believe about yourself.

Take this inventory with several grains of salt. Use it to find out where you stand on these core questions, but do not beat yourself up about your results. You believe what you believe. It is literally true for you at this moment and you can’t just decide to believe something else because it would give you a “better” score.

Likewise, don’t get stuck in the idea that there are exactly ten possible core beliefs. Ten is just a convenient number. It makes the inventory work neatly. But you could make a strong case for love and belonging being such similar issues that they are part of the same belief. Or you could say that safety and the good or evil nature of others are part of the same belief about how vulnerable you are. And we have undoubtedly left out some belief that is very important to you.