



## POSITIVE THINKING

Watching Wimbledon this year reminded me how important it is to have a positive mental outlook to achieve success in life. During the women's semi-final, commentator Tracey Austin questioned whether Amélie Mauresmo had the positive mental strength to beat Maria Sharapova when Amélie took a commanding lead (Amélie did win). Tennis is a classic game to observe how quickly individuals can lose the belief, which inevitably leads to defeat.

What tennis fan could forget the 1993 Wimbledon Final when Jana Novotna mentally choked when she was just two points away from the Championship? She instead lost the game Steffi Graf, who had the stronger belief that she was a Champion.

### **Belief**

We all hold beliefs about ourselves: some are based on our own experiences, some are based on the feedback we have had from others, some are based on results in life.

### **Actions**

When beliefs are positive in nature, our actions will have a strong tendency to be successful, for example: "I know I am good at studying so I will pass exams".

### **Reinforcement**

I have now passed my exams and so the action, backed with my initial belief, will cause me to reinforce my belief that I am good at studying.

What happens, though, if I have a negative belief about myself or my abilities? Our beliefs dictate our actions, so:

### **The flip side**

The above example is a positive example, steered by a positive belief. Each of us steers our own life and our action is a result of the belief we hold about ourselves and our ability. For example, if at the belief stage I now doubt my capacity to study, I start negative self dialogue such as "I know I won't be able to take all this information in", "I will get all confused", "There is too much to take in", "I can imagine the exam room and I will feel ill", "I know I will forget everything", "I'll get another of my headaches" etc.

My action(s) will follow as a result of this: I don't study effectively as I am panicking that I will get confused; when it gets to exam day I feel queasy the moment I am in the exam room, I start to forget facts I should easily remember and cannot finish the paper as a headache starts.

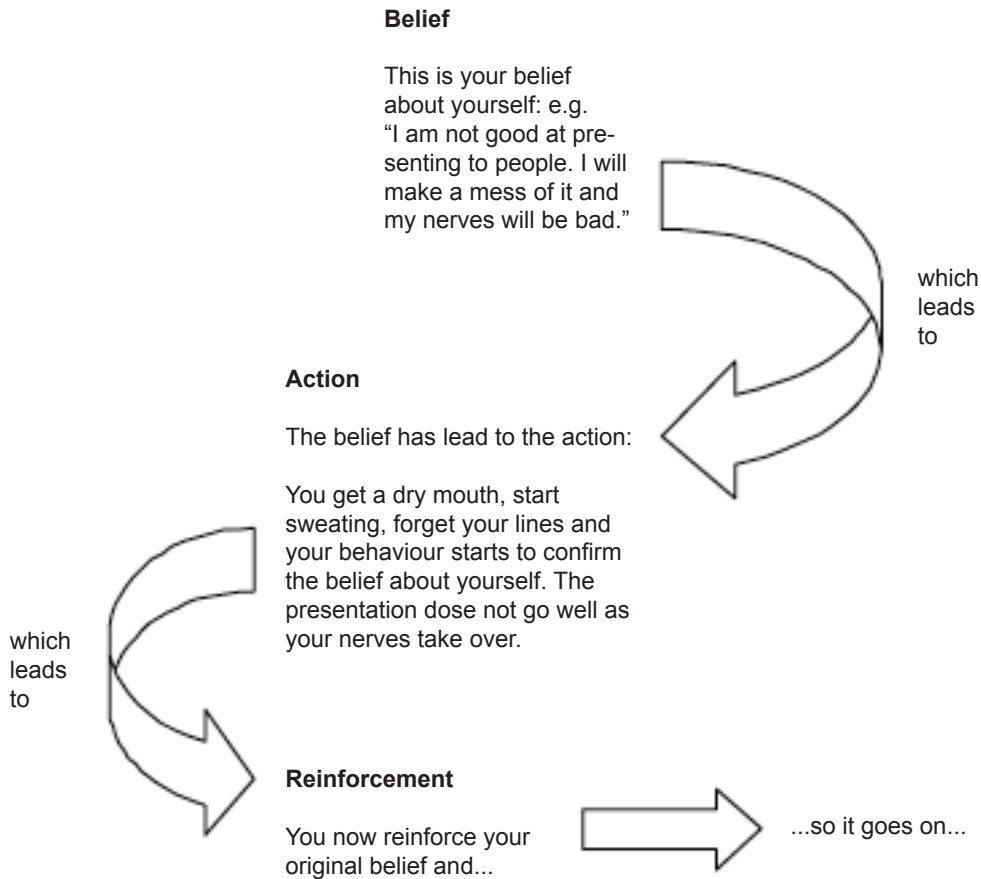
I then reinforce this with statement such as "I knew there was too much for me to take on", "I knew I was no good at exams" etc..





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## Belief-Action Reinforcement Cycle (based on Hay)



Cycles like the above are disablers to each individual achieving their true potential. I have coached some people whose beliefs are so strong that they will not even consider options, halting them with statements such as "that is the way I am" or "that is what will happen".

Introducing people to the *self fulfilling prophecy* usually helps. A self fulfilling prophecy is the result of the Belief-Action-Reinforcement model: e.g. I say "I know I won't get the job" and then I don't get it. I then pat myself on my back saying "I knew that would happen!", "I just knew I didn't have what it takes.".

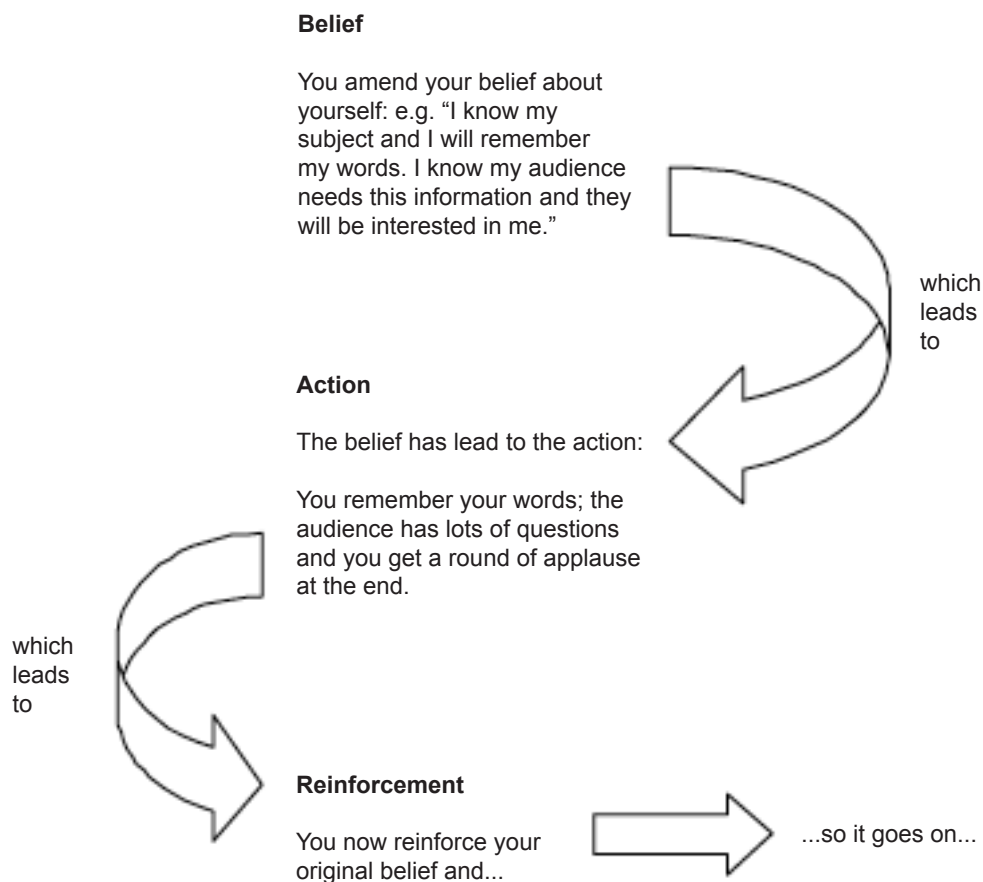
Psychologists have experimented with the self fulfilling prophecy for years; research shows that it is a phenomenon that works!

So listen to yourself the next time you start negative beliefs about changing a situation, improving a relationship and obtaining more of what you want and deserve in life. Reverse the trend:



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## Belief-Action Reinforcement Cycle (based on Hay)



### Call to Action:

- List one area of your life where you are holding yourself back from achieving your potential. (Ask someone close to you whom you trust, if nothing comes to mind).
- Change every negative belief to a positive one. Repeat the message over and over again.
- Visualise the change in action - how you will look, sound, behave, come across.
- Achieve and reinforce the belief that you are a winner in life!

Here's a testimonial of a client of mine who tried it:

"I'd just like to say a big 'Thank You' for the course as it has resulted in me passing my driving test. I was absolutely insistent that I'd pass and I did. I am so happy. "

Emma Jones, Gamble Manufacturing Group Ltd

Reference to Julie Hay, Donkey Bridges for Developmental TA, Sherwood, 1995