
How to Find Out If Your Belief Is True . . .

* Ask People *

“Ask People” means that you check out your belief by hearing what others think of it. The more people you ask, the better, so that you can see how much agreement there is about your belief.

Example: Sarah believed, “If I let myself cry, I’d never stop.” She decided to ask another patient (who was further along in recovery) and her therapist, and to read a book about PTSD. The result: All three sources conveyed the idea that while it is very common to feel this way, it is not true—everyone stops crying eventually.

* Try It and See *

“Try It and See” means “go for it”—try doing something and see what happens. You can also think of it as setting up an experiment because, like a scientist, you design a test and then observe what happens.

Example: Doug was living with a roommate who grew marijuana in the house. He believed, “My roommate won’t be willing to stop.” He decided to use “Try It and See” by asking the roommate directly. The roommate refused. Doug decided that it would be unhealthy to keep living with someone so unsupportive of his recovery, so he decided to move out.

* Predict *

“Predict” means comparing what you *think* will happen versus what *actually* happens.

Example: Judy believed, “No matter how hard I try, I’ll never learn to use my computer.” She felt stupid. To discover the truth, she decided to take a computer class at the local adult learning center. With instruction and practice, she was able to learn the basics, and this made her want to continue with it.

* Act as If *

“Act as If” means trying on a more positive belief to see how it feels. It is especially helpful in situations where you cannot actually find out the truth.

Example: Rick was driving down the highway and a car cut him off. He said, “That jerk! People are so rude.” He felt furious. He decided to try acting as if he believed, “That man is driving his pregnant wife to the hospital to have a baby—no wonder he’s in a rush!” He felt better and slowed down when he assumed this belief. Since he couldn’t find out the truth of the situation—why the car cut him off—he might as well choose to believe the gentler explanation that made him less mad. At the end of the handouts, you can read about a real patient who tried this strategy by going through a weekend “acting as if I liked myself.”

◆ **What does it feel like to try discovery?** It may feel okay, or it may feel scary, risky, or awkward. Don’t worry if it doesn’t feel good right now; it just matters that you try it. In the *long run*, you are likely to feel good about it.

◆ **Remember safety.** As always, make sure that what you set out to do is *safe*. For example, don’t try discovery with anyone who might physically hurt you, such as an abusive partner.

(cont.)

From *Seeking Safety* by Lisa M. Najavits (2002). Copyright by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

COPING WITH BAD NEWS

If you try discovery and things go well, you'll naturally feel much better. But sometimes you'll get negative feedback from your process of discovery. It may feel as though your worst nightmare has come true. For example:

- You may find out that no matter how hard you try, you can't find a job.
- You may get an HIV test and find out you have HIV.
- You may find out that when you tell the truth to your friend, the friend rejects you.

Some people respond to negative feedback by hurting themselves, giving up on life, getting mad at the world, or trying to avoid getting feedback again. Here are some suggestions for healthier ways to cope with negative feedback:

1. **Give yourself credit** for having had the courage to try discovery. No matter what happens, you were brave, open, and on the right path just by trying.
 2. **Figure out, "What's the worst that can happen?"** For example, you may lose a friend but gain self-respect. You may have HIV but can get medical care to prevent it from getting worse.
 3. **Never take it out on yourself** by self-destructiveness, such as drowning your sorrows in substances, self-harm, or self-hatred.
 4. **Remember that negative feedback is just information**, nothing more. If you can listen to it, you can learn much even if it's painful. The most painful truth is better in the long run than the most positive lie. (And if you don't believe this—try using discovery to find out!)
-