

PROFESSED BELIEFS AND ACTUAL BELIEFS

In our experience, based on working with tens of thousands of clients face-to-face as well as millions of others world-wide via virtual and remote means, the data is clear, the reason most people do not fulfil their potential is because they say one thing but actually do something else. This is why we created The Inventory of Incongruence, which is a simple exercise where you list what you ‘say’ you believe against a list of the things that you ‘actually’ do.

For most, to a greater or lesser degree, an interesting pattern emerges, namely incongruence. Incongruence leads us to experience tensions in the form of on-going fear, doubt, despair and unhappiness. We cannot be truly content whilst claiming (to ourselves and others) to believe in this or that, when we spend so much time doing the opposite. This exercise, looking at our contradictions and hypocrisies, is extremely valuable because it illuminates the difference between our professed beliefs - statements we passionately declare to others (and ourselves) and our actual beliefs - as revealed by our actions, which are the true markers of what we really believe.

It is what we actually do that tells the truth about our beliefs. For most, professed beliefs are what a person would like to believe in - an ideal of what sounds or seems best or right – yet when push comes to shove, s/he is unable to stand behind those beliefs, and what s/he really thinks and feels seeps through.

One should not feel shame about these discoveries. The real shame comes from hiding, denying and justifying them. It should be said at this point that most people aren’t even aware that they have professed beliefs and actual beliefs. What has become clear from our work, taking clients on this journey of self-awakening, is that most believe their professed beliefs reflect the truth of their position but it’s only when they are invited to take a closer look at their inner world and actions that they see the glaringly obvious discrepancies between what they think and say and what they actually do.

The following handouts/worksheets are a valuable starting point for those interested in illuminating and addressing those discrepancies.

Who Are You When No One is Looking?
The Inventory of Incongruence
Change Through Compassion
Patternology

Each of these will help you on this journey of identifying your incongruences, because they invite you to stop, listen and reflect, and then make notes about your discoveries.

These tasks need to be undertaken with compassion because without showing kindness to the self, the discoveries one makes can simply lead to greater self-condemnation and negative self-talk, and one will not find benefit in either position.

The handouts/worksheets listed below are helpful examples as you undergo the transition from where you are, to where you would like to be.

Living with Ambivalence 1 & 2
The Art of Acceptance
Old Friend Dear Friend
Self-Care is the Key

Neither list is definitive, because we have an extensive library of resources that can help you look at this subject from many perspectives. However, the suggestions listed are an excellent starting point for those who want to close this gap and turn their professed beliefs into actual beliefs and as a consequence, integrity and peace will be found.

This endeavour will take patience and persistence (see The Three 'P's). Those who do not try to force change, respecting change's patterns and processes, always reach their desired destination. This is because they find joy and contentment wherever they are - recognising force is about impatience and immaturity. Such a person therefore does not try to pre-empt the laws of change, for they realise this is a battle that cannot be won. As a result, he or she comes to recognise that respect and application inevitably lead to positive change and that if they really listen, they will hear and learn what needs to be done next.

All of us are standing at the door of infinite possibility and so we could stay exactly where we are and complain about it and blame everything and everyone, or we can look at what currently enslaves us and address those unwanted, negative traits and tendencies that feed those habits that hold us back.

We would suggest that you start today, identifying what you actually believe. This will require an uncompromising level of honesty. Remember this isn't coming up with a list that sounds impressive and impresses others. This is discovering the truth about where you really stand and what is currently holding you back.

You may not like all that you come to see, but as long as kindness is never far away you will be able to gently hold yourself in a place of growing awareness and increasing clarity. From there you can begin to generate positive change. Any growing pains you experience are just part of the paradox of progress. Progress is peppered with many peaks and valleys, mirages, oases and climatic extremes. As long as you can treat all of these variables and conditions as opportunities for growth and learning, none of them is a real threat to your progress. So any pain or relapses you experience along the way are all part of making you more complete.

This is an exercise that you can do by yourself, although you may find it helpful to do it with someone you trust, because sometimes seeing one's blind spot(s) is difficult because it requires a level of objectivity that is not always easy to access for the untrained mind. So, a kind, 'knowing' pair of eyes can be helpful.

So, as you undertake this exercise, be kind to yourself, as the revelations unfold. Be kind to yourself when you are surprised by the contradictions navigating your life. Be kind to yourself if you're confused about the way forward. Be kind to yourself and all will be well.