

## The Downward Arrow Core Belief Technique

'Core beliefs' are a person's enduring, fundamental beliefs about themselves, others, and the world around them. Core beliefs are not always negative, however, those that are can be problematic. Core beliefs are characterized by a number of factors:

- They are often developed early in life, as a result of childhood experience. They can however, change later in life, for example, as a result of adult trauma.
- They may exist out of conscious awareness.
- They can be exhibited through absolute statements and assumptions such as 'the world is a bad place'.

Because these beliefs are held deeply, at someone's 'core', they may not be particularly aware of them. The downward arrow technique is a socratic questioning method that can help to identify problematic core beliefs. At step 3, choose one of the below questions to ask yourself

### Questions To Ask Yourself

1. What does this negative thought mean?
2. What does this negative thought mean about you?
3. What does this negative thoughts mean about others
4. What does this negative thought mean about the world?
5. If this is true, why does it bother you?
6. If this is true, why is it so bad?
7. If this is true what does it mean for your future?

**Step 1: Identify a situation bringing up negative emotions**

*E.g. An upcoming university exam which brings about anxiety*



**Step 2: Write down what thoughts accompany this situation and your feelings**

*E.g. I'm definitely going to fail this exam*



**Step 3: What does this negative thought mean? (Or a question from the list)**

*E.g. My parents will be disappointed in me again, like always*



**Step 4: What does this negative thought mean about you?**

*E.g. I'm a failure*