

Most people have little insight into what ignites their day-to-day behavior, according to scientific evidence. Often described as *motives*, the instrumental forces that drive and direct our behavior are based on a series of tacit beliefs that we have about ourselves. In aggregate, these self-beliefs determine the direction and intensity of our motivated action. The beliefs determine what we do, how we do it, and how we see our accomplishments in relation to the rest of the world.

Self-beliefs are so powerful that the evaluations will strongly influence the careers we seek, the relationships we pursue, and ultimately what we do or do not accomplish in life.

Ironically, if I asked you to name which self-beliefs influence you most you probably wouldn't know where to begin. Beliefs are implicit, which means many of the personal theories we have about ourselves operate automatically and unconsciously.

Self-beliefs are not religious, political or secular views and don't include things such things as how you like your eggs cooked or whether you think reading is a more effective strategy for knowledge gain than watching videos. Instead, self-beliefs are the guiding principles and assessments we make about our personal capabilities and what outcomes we expect as a result of our efforts. By bringing these beliefs to the forefront of consciousness, people can take steps to harness the power and influence of their beliefs. But what are these mysterious beliefs that determine the totality of our being?

1. Control

The most dominant self-belief is our assessment of the degree of control we have over our own destiny. Control beliefs dictate whether pursue goals and task for reasons external to the psychic self or to satisfy the inner psychological strivings of the core self. People with an external focus feel that their destiny is *not* within their direct control.

Diminished control beliefs result in ascribing life events and accomplishments to fate, luck or circumstances the individual cannot or will not influence, such as what happens when a person believes they are stuck in a tedious job because of poor market conditions. Frequently individuals with an external perspective will not seek challenges and will avoid setting stretch goals, settling instead for the status quo. Conversely, people with strong control

goals, settling instead for the status quo. Conversely, people with strong control beliefs feel in command of their perceptual world. They believe they can orchestrate their career, social relationships and lifestyle. The internal focus acts as a catalyst for personal growth and development because the individual takes responsibility and is accountable for their own success or failures.

2. Competency

Competency beliefs are also highly influential for motivated behavior.

Competency beliefs include assessments of our overall ability to achieve desired outcomes but can also reflect micro-level assessments of the perceived skills and abilities needed to complete a task, such as writing an article or installing computer software.

The sources of competency appraisals are varied; some are based on past performance, while others focus on current challenges or on the anticipation of gaining desirable outcomes. Individuals will tend to appraise their degree of competence not entirely upon actual ability and knowledge but upon presumed competency beliefs, including the perception of the individual by others.

Competency assessments can influence perceptions of overall self-worth and can be the deciding factor in determining whether a person will engage in a task or elect to defer, withdraw or completely avoid a challenge. Task avoidance is motivated by fear of failure based on a perceived likelihood of undesirable evaluations from others, or because of the dismal prospect of generating negative emotions such as doubt, guilt, or humiliation that often accompany task failure.
