

3. Value

A third influential self-belief is the degree of value we associate with different task outcomes, which fluctuates according to individual and culture standards as well as the extent of cognitive, social and moral development. When ascribing low value to a potential goal or task, individuals are reluctant to invest effort. For example, who would devote extraordinary cognitive and financial resources to completing law school or invest physical energy toward running in a 10-mile race when the payoff is seen as marginal, uninteresting or of questionable value?

Value assessments include attainment value that represents the degree of relative importance the individual places on the contemplated task: *intrinsic value*, measured by how much an individual subjectively enjoys doing and completing the task, and *utility value*, which represents the perceived usefulness afforded to doing or mastering the task from an applied perspective.

Self-beliefs that ascribe little value to ethical and honest behavior may be one of the key reasons accounting for the frequency of what is described as *moral disengagement*, a practice whereby individuals and corporations are willing to engage in questionable business practices, lack of environmental concern, or deliberate law-breaking under the auspices of weak moral convictions.

4. Goal orientation

A fourth and highly influential self-belief relates to the reasons we pursue goals. *Goal orientation* represents the alleged purpose for engaging in learning or the reasons a particular performance target is chosen. Typically situated as an explanation of academic behavior, individuals may elect to pursue academic knowledge and personal development for either normative and appearance reasons or for the inherent satisfaction of mastering a skill or ability.

...orientation that may accompany goal failure. This approach employs a social comparison motive because the individual is less concerned about results but more focused on the assessment of capability from others. Conversely, mastery-oriented individuals typically show greater interest in the accumulation of knowledge, unlike the cosmetic intentions of relative expertise endemic to the normative performer. The impact of orientation is highly instrumental in the strategies that individuals will use to reach their goals. Mastery performers are more inclined to seek help when needed, are better at monitoring their task progress, and are more willing to try new or alternative strategies to reach their desired outcomes than their egotistical peers.

5. Epistemology

Fifth, people have beliefs about the nature of knowledge acquisition and intelligence in general. While many different types of views may be espoused concerning “epistemology,” people fall into one of three categories when it comes to how knowledge is acquired and advanced:

- Individuals may believe that knowledge is fixed, meaning there is one way, and only one way, to approach a problem or opportunity. People embracing this absolutist philosophy will adhere to dogmas, believing, for example, that the best jobs are only landed as a result of strong social connections and not through skill development.

- Other individuals may assume a more flexible approach to thinking and believe that different opinions may be justified; they are willing to consider alternative perspectives (although usually deferring to their desired position).
- Others will assess all views as equally warranted but believe that one position is clearly justified based on statutory, ethical or humanistic considerations, such as when people are motivated to devote time and resources to charitable causes because of it's the "right" thing to do.

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Closely related to epistemology beliefs are conceptions concerning general intelligence. Polarized views of intelligence suggest that individuals believe that intelligence is either subject to modification based upon the acquisition of new knowledge, representing an *incremental* view, or that intelligence, like flat feet or bushy eyebrows, is a reality that must be accepted, thus adopting an *entity* intelligence view. Assessment of the malleability of epistemological and intelligence views can prove quite useful because each view provides revealing clues as to the behavior individuals will exhibit regarding persuasion, negotiation and sales efforts during many facets of their lives.

While the list of beliefs here is not inclusive, it is based on the confluence of evidence from educational, social and developmental psychology. Self-beliefs abound and clearly can be traced to many of the behaviors people exhibit in organizations, relationships and during the very basic transactions of human existence. While the science of behavioral prediction is indeed a slippery slope, traction can be gained by moving beyond the symptomatic evaluation of demonstrated behavior to a focus on which self-beliefs are most instrumental for motivated action.