

## 6. Beliefs That Cause Problems

Let's pretend for a moment that we are all wearing invisible glasses. And that those glasses come with lots and lots of different lenses. We can change lenses whenever we choose. Take out this set, put in that set. Take out that set, replace it with another set. Decide that set is no longer useful? Throw it out.

The lenses are not regular, ordinary lenses. Instead, they represent beliefs or ideas, and they influence how we see life. They affect what we do, think and feel.

Imagine a three-year old child who walks into a store with his father. He comes around a corner and there in front of him, is a shelf full of candy. The child has on his invisible glasses. Out goes one set of lenses and in comes a new set. The new lenses (let's give them a number, say lens set #6) is the belief that says "I MUST HAVE CANDY TO BE HAPPY!" It is the child's belief or idea

that "I need candy to be happy! If I can't have all the candy I want, right now, I will be miserable! It will be awful! The world will come to an end! I will just die!"

What happens when the child's father says "No"? Does the world come to an end? Does the child die? Of course not. The child may cry and scream and kick and hit, but, five minutes later, he is laughing and happy. The world has not ended; the child is still breathing; grass is still growing.

The child's belief, "I MUST HAVE CANDY TO BE HAPPY" doesn't make sense; it was nonsense, silly, and not true. Such a belief or idea that does not make sense is an "irrational" idea. We all have irrational ideas. We also have "rational" ideas—ideas that do make sense.



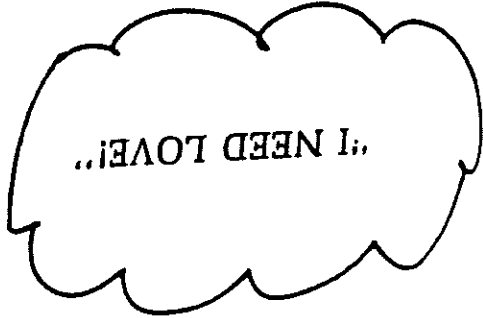
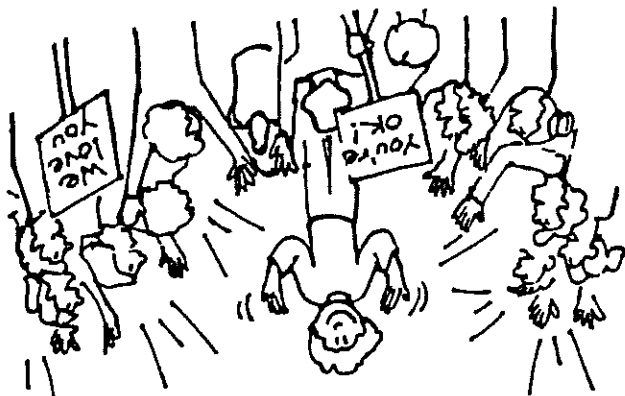
At some point in the child's life (after lots of crying, screaming, and kicking) he is going to begin to take lenses out of the box and spread them out. He will begin to study them and to question them. "Do I really want to keep on using this lens? Sometimes it causes me problems." It might have been nice if the child's father could go get lens #6 and throw it out. But, only the child can do that. After some time he will understand that lens set #6 causes him lots of problems and that the idea doesn't make sense. Then he will throw it out.

The rest of this chapter contains eleven of the irrational beliefs or ideas that can cause problems. We may hold to some of these ideas and not to others. These thoughts were identified by Ellis (1962) and are useful. They can help us understand why we feel bad sometimes. They are ideas about what we think life in this world is or should be. When we think life should be one way and it turns out that it is not that way, something has to happen! Either we have to be upset a whole lot of the time, or something has to change. Let's see, what are the options? The world can change or I can change. Can I change the world?

**ELEVEN BELIEFS THAT CAUSE PROBLEMS**

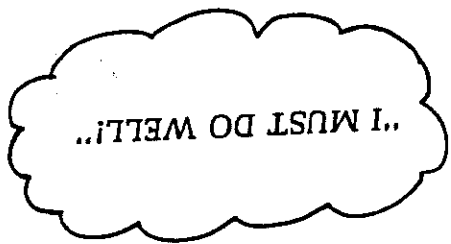
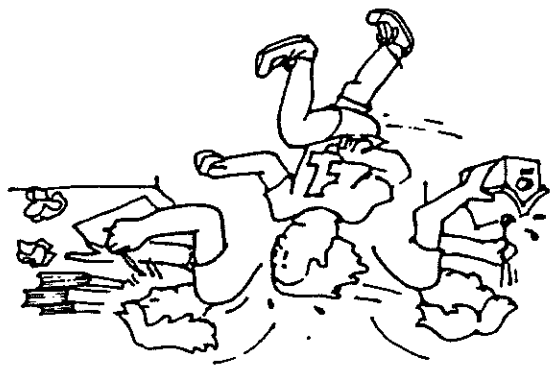
**1. EVERYBODY MUST LOVE ME!**

The idea that we need love and approval all the time. If we don't get enough, we feel awful. We think, "Nobody loves me. I must be awful! I'm such a crumb!" We feel sorry for ourselves ("Poor me!") The most important thing is to "get love." We will do anything for more love.



**2. I MUST BE GOOD AT EVERYTHING!**

The idea that we must do everything well to feel good about ourselves. We can't fail. If someone else wins, we feel awful. We say to ourselves, "I lost, so I'm no good. I failed, so I'm lousy. I came in 2nd, how awful!" But fear of failure can keep us from doing a good job.



The idea that it is awful when things are different than the way we want them to be. We think "How terrible; things are just awful." We can't accept things the way they really are. We get upset if we can't change things to fit our ideas of what they should be. But there is no reason we should like everything.

### 4. THINGS SHOULD BE DIFFERENT!



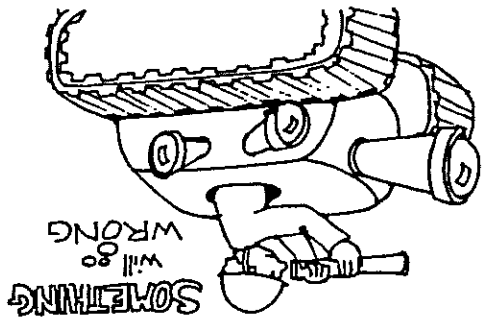
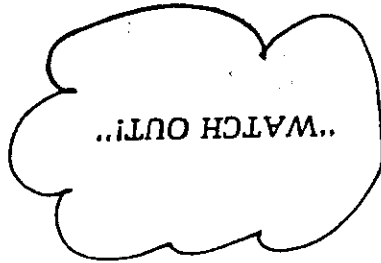
The idea that people who do things that we don't like are bad people. They should be blamed and punished. We think, "He's bad; he should go to jail. She's terrible; we should get rid of her. They are evil; they should go to prison." We can feel that way about ourselves too.

### 3. SOME PEOPLE ARE BAD: THEY MUST BE PUNISHED!



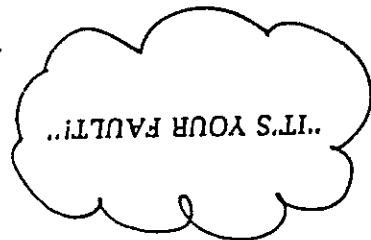
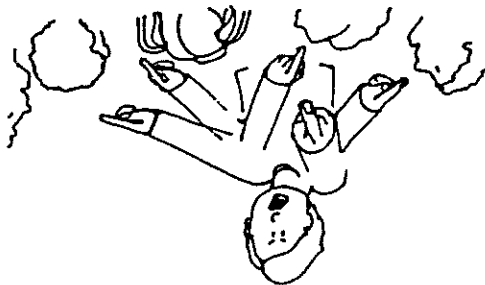
The idea that we need to always watch out for things to go wrong. "A car may hit me. A dog may bite me. A lion may eat me on the way to school. I will worry about it so I can be ready for it. I need to keep watching. I can't relax."

### 6. I KNOW SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN- SOON!



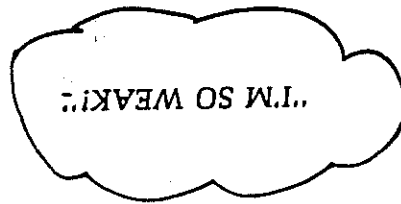
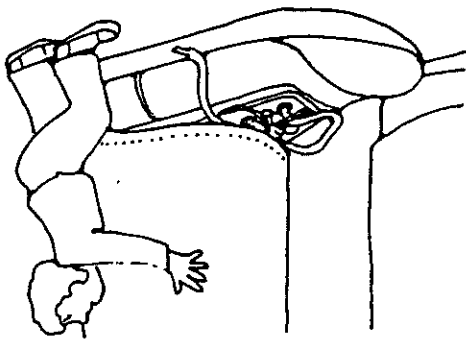
The idea that somebody else makes us feel the way we do. If we are unhappy, it is because of what someone else said or did. "It's not my fault that I'm unhappy," we say. "You make me feel mad. You make me upset. Other people should change so that I will feel better. It's their job to change. I can't help it."

### 5. IT'S YOUR FAULT I FEEL THIS WAY!



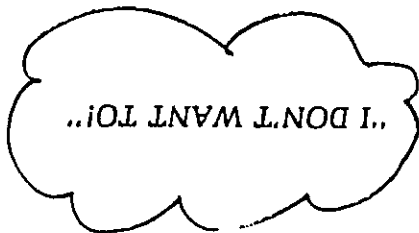
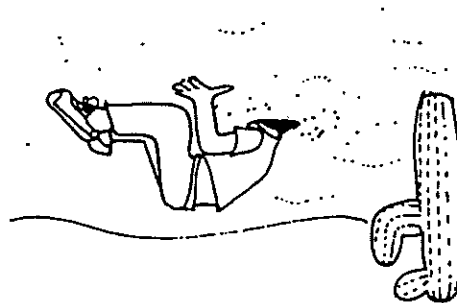
The idea that we should depend on other people who are stronger than us. The feeling that "I am weak. I can't make my own decisions. Tell me what to think and do. Take care of me." But we are different from everyone else. We will need to learn to make our own decisions because we know ourselves best.

### 8. I NEED SOMEONE STRONGER THAN ME!



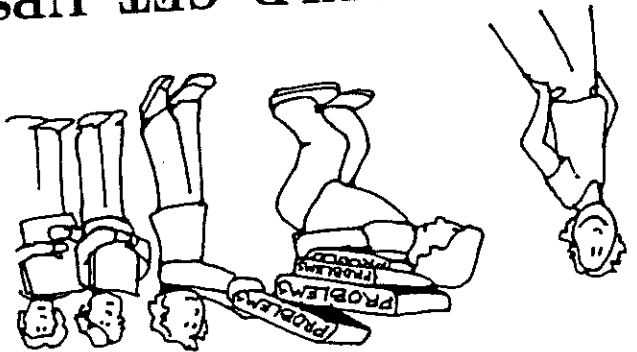
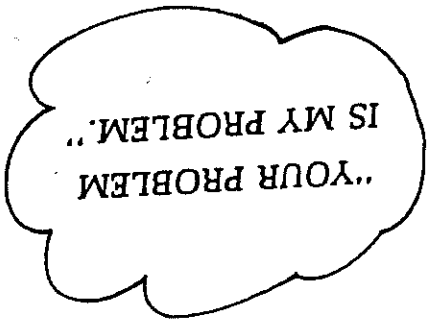
The idea that it is easier to avoid difficult tasks in life than to face them. Life is too hard, so we should not try. It is far better to give up. We think, "I give up! I want it to be easy. I can't try. It's too hard. I don't want to take the responsibility."

### 7. IT'S EASIER NOT TO EVEN TRY!



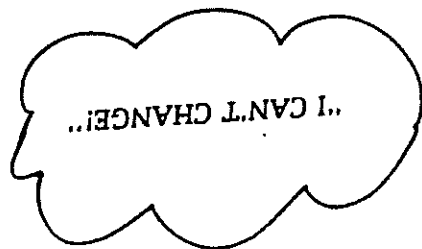
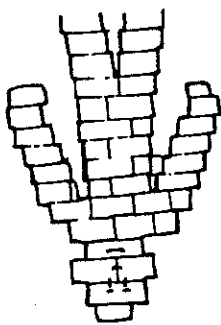
The idea that other people's problems should become our problems. The feeling that we need to change other people. The feeling that it is our job to solve other people's problems and to fix everything in their lives. Their problems are now our problems. We think "I'll take care of you. I'll take your problems."

### 10. I SHOULD GET UPSET ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS.



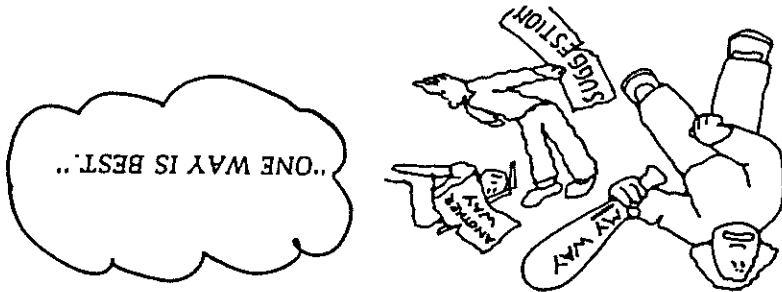
The idea that things happened to us when we were little, and that made us the way we are. "I'll probably always be this way. The past is the most important thing. There is no hope that I could change."

### 9. I CAN'T HELP BEING THIS WAY!



The idea that there is one right way to do things and the other ways are no good. Only one way is best. If we don't do something the best way, it will be awful. We think, "He shouldn't do it that way. His way is all wrong. We have to do it exactly this way. If I don't find the perfect way I'll ruin it."

# 11. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOOD WAY TO DO IT.





# ACTIVITIES

## *Which Irrational Belief has been replaced with New Language?*

Below are some Rational Thoughts that will help people feel O.K. Review Chapter 6 and decide which Irrational Thought has been changed by the new statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ "That's something I can't change, but I can accept it the way it is."

\_\_\_\_\_ "Everything will be just fine. I will relax and enjoy it."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I have lots of people who love and care for me. I am loved and valued."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I don't understand some people and I don't like what some people do, but they are responsible for themselves."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I am responsible for my own feelings."  
\_\_\_\_\_ "I will not give up."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I will help if I can, but I cannot solve your problem."  
\_\_\_\_\_ "I can take care of things for myself. I am strong."

\_\_\_\_\_ "That is an interesting idea. Maybe there are several good answers."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I am good at some things and not so good at others. That is O.K."

\_\_\_\_\_ "I am changing all the time. I can choose to change in whatever way I want."



# ELEVEN BELIEFS THAT WILL NOT CAUSE PROBLEMS

1. **EVERYBODY DOESN'T HAVE TO LOVE ME.**  
Not everybody has to love me, or even like me. I don't necessarily like everybody I know, so why should everybody else like me? I enjoy being liked and being loved, but if somebody doesn't like me, I will still be O.K. and still feel like I am an O.K. person. I cannot "make" somebody like me any more than someone can get me to like them. I don't need approval all the time. If someone does not approve of me, I will still be O.K.

2. **IT IS O.K. TO MAKE MISTAKES**  
It is O.K. to make a mistake. Making mistakes is something we all do, and I am still a fine and worthwhile person when I make mistakes. There is no reason for me to get upset when I make a mistake, and if I make a mistake, I am going to continue trying. I can handle making a mistake. It is O.K. for others to make mistakes, too. I will accept mistakes in myself and also mistakes that others make.

3. **OTHER PEOPLE ARE O.K. AND I AM O.K.**  
People who do things I don't like are not necessarily bad people. They should not necessarily be punished just because I don't like what they do or did. There is no reason why another person should be the way I want them to be, and there is no reason why I should be the way somebody else wants me to be. People will be whatever they want to be, and I will be whatever I want to be. I cannot control other people, or change them. They are who they are; we all deserve basic respect and reasonable treatment.

4. **I DON'T HAVE TO CONTROL THINGS**  
I will survive if things are different than what I want them to be. I can accept things the way they are, accept people the way they are, and accept myself the way I am. There is no reason to get upset if I can't change things to fit my idea of how they ought to be. There is no reason why I should have to like everything. Even if I don't like it, I can live with it.

5. **I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR MY DAY**  
I am responsible for how I feel, and for what I do. Nobody can make me feel anything. If I have a rotten day, I am the one who allowed it to be that way. If I have a great day, I am the one who deserves credit for being positive. It is not the responsibility of other people to change so that I can feel better. I am the one who is in charge of my life.

6. **I CAN HANDLE IT WHEN THINGS GO WRONG**  
I don't need to watch out for things to go wrong. Things usually go just fine, and when they don't, I can handle it. I don't have to waste my energy worrying. The sky won't fall in; things will be O.K.

7. **IT IS IMPORTANT TO TRY**  
I can. Even though I may be faced with difficult tasks, it is better to try than to avoid them. Avoiding a task does not give me any opportunities for success or joy, but trying does. Things worth having are worth the effort. I might not be able to do everything, but I can do something.

8. I don't need someone else to take care of my problems. I am capable. I can take care of myself. I can make decisions for myself...I can think for myself. I don't have to depend on somebody else to take care of me.

### *I AM CAPABLE*

9. I can change. I don't have to be a certain way because of what has happened in the past. Every day is a new day. It's silly to think I can't help being the way I am. Of course I can.

### *I CAN CHANGE*

10. I can't solve other people's problems for them. I don't have to take on other people's problems as if they were my own. I don't need to change other people, or fix up their lives. They are capable and can take care of themselves, and can solve their own problems. I can care and be of some help, but I can't do everything for them.

### *OTHER PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE*

11. There is more than one way to do something. More than one person has good ideas that will work. There is no one and only "best" way. Everybody has ideas that are worthwhile. Some may make more sense to me than others, but everyone's ideas are worthwhile, and everyone has something worthwhile to contribute.

### *I CAN BE FLEXIBLE*

# What Does the New Language Replace?

Several examples of New Language are listed below. Each statement represents a new, rational belief that has replaced an old, irrational belief. Read the statement, and then draw a line from the "New Language" statement to the old belief that is being replaced. How do you think the person having those new thoughts might be feeling?

1. This isn't happening the way that I had wanted it to, but I can handle it when things don't go the way I wanted. I don't have to control everything. Even if I don't like it, I can live with it.

2. I don't have to be a certain way because of what has happened to me in the past. It doesn't really matter what happened. I can be what I want anyway.

3. I am a capable person. I can handle my difficulties, and I can use good judgment.

4. This is really hard for me and I don't like doing it. But I can at least try and at least I can do my best. I will put out the effort.

5. I don't need to worry about something going wrong. Things usually go just fine, and when they don't, I can handle it O.K. Whatever happens, I will still be O.K. and can make it through.

6. I am the one who is responsible for how my day goes. Nobody can make me feel anything and nobody can ruin my day. No matter what happens, I can still have an O.K. day and can still feel O.K. about myself and about other people.

7. I can be flexible, even if things don't go the way I had wanted. I can accept other people and their ideas. There is something of value in every suggestion and in every method.

8. I don't need the approval of every important person in my life, all of the time.

9. There is no reason others should be the way I want them to be, nor any reason why I should be the way others might want me to be. I can accept other the way they are, and I can accept myself the way I am.

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Matching Language with Beliefs

Listed on the left are a number of irrational statements. On the right are pictures which represent eleven irrational beliefs. Find the belief on the right that is being expressed by the statement, and write the belief number in the blank. You may find that more than one belief is being expressed.

Example: #3 "She's worthless."  
 "The rain ruined my whole day."  
 "Everything would be fine if it weren't for him"

"I can't help being this way!"  
 "I can't be happy without you."  
 "He shouldn't be that way!"

"If the kids tease me, I'll just die."  
 "Why should I even bother trying?"  
 "What if I don't do it right the first time? It will be just awful!"

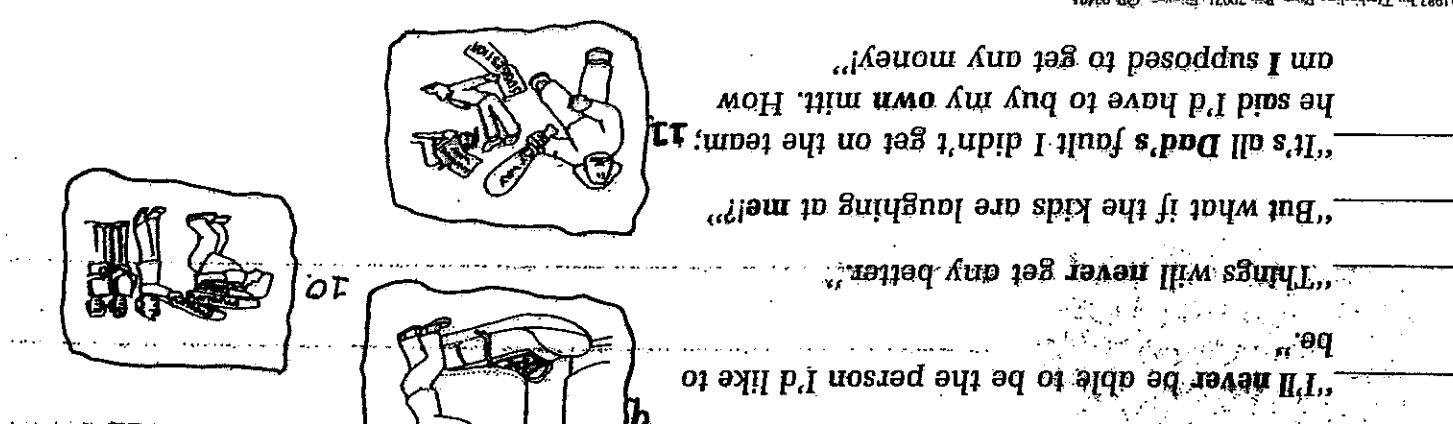
"Don't worry, I'll take care of you."  
 "I'm no good."  
 "I'm just in everybody's way; things would be lots better if I just weren't around."

"Not I can't stand things being this way!"  
 "Look at the way he dresses! He's such a jerk!"  
 "Why should I enter the race? I didn't win last year, did I?"

"Never mind your silly ideas; this is what we're going to do."  
 "I'll never be able to be the person I'd like to be."  
 "Things will never get any better."

"But what if the kids are laughing at me!"  
 "It's all Dad's fault I didn't get on the team; it's he said I'd have to buy my own mitt. How am I supposed to get any money!"

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# ACTIVITIES

*Which Irrational Thoughts are being used?*

Below are some Irrational Thoughts. Review the chapter and decide which thought is being used:

“It’s too hard. I give up.”

“What if I don’t get First Place!”

“You decide for me. You take care of it for me.”

“If I do good, people will love me more.”

“People should be different.”

“I just know something awful is going to happen!”

“We’re going to do it *this way!*”

“It’s all *your* fault I got so upset!”

“He’s just awful. He should be in jail.”

“Don’t worry about it. Leave your problems to me. I’ll take care of everything.”

“I’ve been this way so long; I don’t think I can change.”

“I’m no good.”

## Commercials & Ads

Where do irrational beliefs come from? This is an important question to ask if we really want to get rid of them. They come from a number of sources: Friends—adults—T.V.—commercials—billboards—magazines—movies.

Advertisers make a lot of money off our misery. They're very smart people. They understand that if they can make us believe that we just have to have their product in order to "be happy," then we will buy it. But it doesn't work that way. We end up feeling pretty much the same; they end up with our allowance. People who can get us to act on our irrational beliefs do indeed have a lot of control over us. The person who has a belief that he just has to smoke to be tough will part with his allowance at the first cigarette machine he sees. The ad-men love it!

Advertising language is full of "shoulds" and "what-its" and "have tos." The ads don't say that directly, of course. They hint at it. Gather some magazines designed for teens and tear out some of the advertisements. Study both the pictures and the language. You'll find lots of irrational beliefs hinted at. What kind of junk-thought do the advertisements elicit in people?

**Your business is looking good!**  
**Where a man belongs.**  
**LIVE THE DREAM.**  
**Be a model.** (for...just look like one)  
**FOLLOW THE LEADER**  
**THE ANSWER.**