

You could also do something similar on your phone or as a pop-up on a computer.

## Acting it out

You will probably remember that we noted in the previous chapter that *thinking* differently is not enough. You also need to *act* on your new thoughts. New thoughts and new behaviour make a terrifically powerful combination. Rather in the way that two bicycles can lean against each other and prop each other up in a perfectly stable way for ever, your new thinking is supported by your new behaviour and, equally, your new behaviour is supported by your new thinking. The two will constantly reinforce each other. It's the closest we are ever going to get to perpetual motion.

So how do we act it out? There are a couple of possibilities:

- Simply imagine how a person with the new, more helpful alternative belief would act and mimic that.
- Find yourself a role model. In other words, think of somebody who acts like they believe the new improved belief, imagine what they would do, and do it.

In either case you have to do it with a degree of conviction. For example, Lola of the mug-dropping teenage son needs to really work on her belief that he is basically okay (rather than fundamentally selfish), and she would do well to set an example of friendliness and helpfulness and really act like she *believes* these two new beliefs. So, rather than uttering the words 'Get a brush and sweep it up' through clenched teeth (which, admittedly would be an improvement over her previous behaviour), she goes the whole hog and says, 'Get a brush and sweep it up, there's a good boy', complete with matching encouraging tone. The point is that what she is aiming for is not simply to tidy up her behaviour so that it's not so wearing for her and everybody else, but to align her new, more helpful behaviour with new, more helpful underlying beliefs, so that she is genuinely at peace with herself and other people can see that. This is clearly much better for all concerned than simply 'keeping the lid on it'.

In just the same way Omar, sitting near the door of the bar, will now realise that the five individuals who left the door open are not selfish scoundrels who deserve punishment, but perfectly okay individuals who just need to be reminded to shut the door. The way he asks them to do that will therefore be friendly and calm, in line with that belief. Likewise, Errol, whose wife contradicts him in public, will realise that although others might laugh when this happens, this does not indicate that they are fundamentally hostile to him, because people are mostly supportive and friendly. Acting it out, he can now join in the laughter. Similarly

Brandon need not get himself into a stew by distressing himself over things not being just as he would like them to be. He can simply get on and do the job the boss asks, or not. What was winding him up was how awful it was that things were not as he would wish. Now he's resigned to that fact he can simply get on with things. Ella's flirting need not irritate Lemy now that he accepts that neither Ella nor other people are basically hostile, but rather that most people are friendly and supportive; he can take Ella's behaviour for the harmless amusement it is, and act things out by just joining in.

Terry, too, had he accepted that most people are okay rather than hostile, would not have jumped to the conclusion that his elbow was jogged deliberately at the bar. He would have assumed it was an accident, possibly made a joke out of it, and might even have got himself a free pint. Amy would not have lost her temper with her daughter, sitting in the bath not tidying her room. Rather than being so uptight because things were not as she would wish (the room was still untidy) and determined that the girl must be punished for her misdemeanour, she could have accepted that sometimes children have untidy rooms and that anyway her best option is to be setting a good example as a parent. Nor need Chris have gone chasing the man who cut across his path on the roundabout. If only he had accepted that people do not need to be punished for their misdemeanours, and that sometimes they even get away with them, he could have simply acted this belief out by keeping up his own standards and driving his car as

he thinks cars should be driven – and saved himself a lot of trouble.

## A role model can be helpful

We can see from these examples that it is straightforward enough to decide on a new belief and act it out in daily life. Plenty of people do that with a lot of success and a lot of pleasure. (It is very satisfying to see yourself take charge of your own destiny, decide on sensible beliefs and act in line with them.) Other people get to exactly the same destination by a different route. They think of a particular person who seems to have the kind of beliefs we have spoken about and ask themselves, 'What would s/he do in this situation?' For some people, imagining it makes it a lot easier to mimic. And mimicking the behaviour effectively consolidates the new beliefs.

The role model can be somebody you know, like a friend or relative, or it can be somebody you've never actually met – someone you've seen on television, perhaps. One important point if you choose the latter: it doesn't particularly matter if the person resembles their screen persona in real life or not. For example, my two favourite role models are the television business troubleshooter Marius Harvey-Jones and ace cricket commentator Brian Johnston. Now, I've never met either of these good people, and for all I know they might have been quite different in private life from the genial characters they presented on television and radio. As a matter of fact, both gentlemen are, or were – Brian