

## Developing more helpful beliefs

For this we use the **AA** method — which, in this case, has nothing to do with too much alcohol consumption. Here it stands simply for (a) developing better **A**lternative beliefs and (b) **A**cting them out.

- 'Unhelpful' belief: Things should be just exactly how I want them to be. It is awful if they are not.

Suggestion for more helpful alternative: It's nice if things are just the way I want them, but it's not the end of the world if they're not.

- People don't take any notice of you unless you show that you are irritated or angry. It is the only way of making your point.

Suggestion for more helpful alternative: Although you can sometimes get people to do what you want by being irritable and angry with them, you never really get them on your side. So it's better to talk and persuade. Even then people won't always do what we want, but that's not the end of the world either.

- Other people are basically selfish, self-centered and unhelpful. If you want them to help you, you have to make them.

Alternative: Although there are some people who are very selfish indeed, most people will help each other out if asked.

- Other people are basically hostile. You have to be on the alert otherwise they will take any opportunity to put you down.

Although there are a few people who can be quite hostile, most people basically support one another and take a good view of each other.

- If people do wrong they must be punished, you can't let people get away with things.

It's better to persuade than punish, to look to the future rather than the past. Sometimes you can't even persuade and people do get away with things. So, I'll just keep up my own standards.

- It's okay to get angry with/hit policemen, bouncers, etc.

Policemen, bouncers etc. are actually real people just like anybody else. It's no more reasonable to hit them than to hit any other person.

- A father/mother/foreman/ manager/supervisor is meant to be snappy, irritable and harsh. (Where you are a father/mother/ foreman/manager/ supervisor.)

A father/ mother/foreman/manager/ supervisor needs to set a good example. That means being friendly and supportive rather than irritable and angry.

- My father/mother/partner/ son/daughter is a complete pain in the neck, it irritates me just to look at him/her. (Where there is one particular person who produces that emotional reaction in you.)

My father/ mother/partner/son/daughter is just like anybody else — they've got their good points and bad points. It's no use getting hung up on their bad points.

### **Use cue-cards if you want**

Some people actually write out a small card for themselves (known as a cue-card).

This has the *unhelpful* belief written on the one side and a more *helpful alternative* on the other.

Sometimes people will make quite elaborate versions of these. For example, you might write the unhelpful version in red (for 'danger') and the more helpful version on the other side in green (for 'go').

And you might perhaps add an exhortation after the helpful version, like 'Now do it!'

Some people even go off to their local print shop and get the card nicely laminated once they have got it just how they want!

Whether you like your card basic or exotic, it's quite a nice idea to carry it around with you as a constant reminder.

You probably won't need eight cards — it's unlikely that you are falling prey to all eight of the unhelpful beliefs, probably just one or two -- in which case you just need one or two cards. Possibly just one.