

## Why do I Get Angry? Beliefs part one

Beliefs we hold act as a lens that filters the way we make sense of and interpret the world. For example, imagine you're a teacher and you hold a belief that "black boys are often more disruptive". You're in class and the black boy blurts out and says "whys that then?" Let's try that again, you're in class and a girl from an Indian background blurts out and says "whys that then?"

A famous experiment in the 1960s looking at the effects of labelling went in to a High School and tested all the kids and then told the teachers to expect 'rapid intellectual growth' from a subgroup of these tested kids. They went back a year later to find that most of the subgroup had in fact shown considerable improvement compared to the others. However, in reality there was nothing 'special' about the subgroup, they had just been selected randomly.

Let's look at some beliefs that people can hold:

- a) 'Things should be just how I want them to be'
- b) 'People take no notice unless you are irritated or angry at them'
- c) 'People are selfish, self-centred and unhelpful'
- d) 'People are hostile and constantly trying to put you down'
- e) 'If people do wrong they must be punished, you can't let people get away with things'.

### Changing Beliefs – The Advantages

Brandon, the electrician, feels really 'put upon' and angry when his boss asks him to do extra tasks towards the end of the day. If Brandon could alter his belief that 'other people are always likely to be trying to take advantage of me', then he would feel less put upon when his boss asks him to do extra jobs.

And Lemy, when Ella laughs and jokes with other men it makes him very angry. On the other hand, when Michelle laughs and jokes with other men, her husband Jamie does not get angry. If Lemy could realise that other people (including his wife Ella, and the men she flirts with) are not always trying to put him down, he would feel much more relaxed about her playfulness.

In one evening in November 1999 a total of around one million people drank in a British bar. Of that one million people, about 10,000 were jogged so that they spilt their drink over themselves. Of those 10,000, Terry was the only one who broke a beer mug and pushed it in the face of the person who jogged him. Terry's belief that 'other people are hostile and likely to be putting me down' resulted in very serious consequences for him when he put a broken beer mug in the face of the person who jogged his elbow. Not only could those consequences have been avoided but, had he realised that most people are not hostile in this way, he would have lived a much more relaxed and enjoyable life.

Can you see the terrific pay-off that each of these people would receive if only they could alter their beliefs?