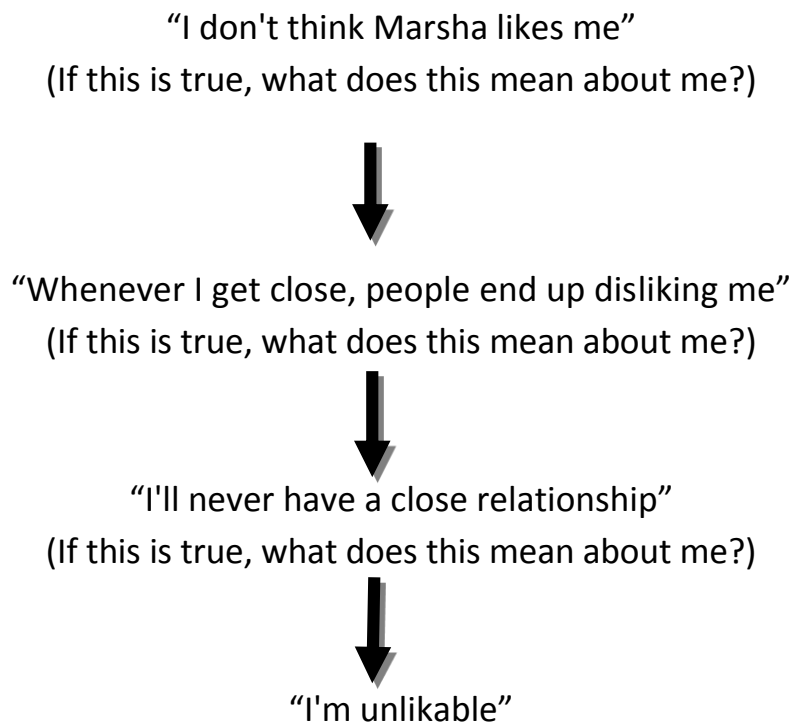


Identifying Core Beliefs: The Downward Arrow Technique

One way to identify core beliefs is called the "downward arrow technique." Sometimes repeatedly asking yourself, "What does this mean about me?" will help reveal core beliefs about yourself that underlie automatic thoughts you have previously identified. For example, if Marissa had the automatic thought "I don't think Marsha likes me," and this thought contributed to her depressed mood, the downward arrow technique would help her find her core belief in this way:



The preceding example illustrates how to identify core beliefs about **oneself**. We also have core beliefs about **others** and **the world**. The downward arrow technique can be used to identify core beliefs about **others** or **the world** by modifying the questions.

Beliefs about other people can be identified with the downward arrow technique by asking this question:

"If this is true, what does this mean or say about other people?"

Assumptions or core beliefs about **the world** can be identified by asking:

"If this is true, what does this say or mean about the world and how it works?"

For example:

Other People

Situation: Vic and his colleagues received new sales quotas.

Vic's Automatic Thought: "Everyone will be able to meet these quotas but me".

Downward Arrow:

(What does this say or mean about other people?)



"They are able to do the work more easily than I am"

(If this is true, what does this say or mean about other people?)



"Others are more competent than I am"

The World and How it Works

Situation: Marissa is called in by her supervisor for an evaluation meeting.

Marissa's Automatic Thought: "I've made a mistake again. He's going to fire me"

Downward Arrow:

(What does this say or mean about the world and how it works?)



"Bad things are always happening to me"

(If this is true, what does this say or mean about the world and how it works?)



"The world is harsh and punishing"

(If this is true, what does this say or mean about the world and how it works?)



"The world works against me"