



# FITNESS FOR THE MIND:



Dealing  
With  
Negative  
Beliefs  
That Hold  
You Back



**William Morgan**

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## **About the Author**

### ***William D. Morgan, Psy.D.***

Dr. Bill Morgan is an executive, business, and career coach and founder of Leadership Concepts ([www.LeadershipConcepts.net](http://www.LeadershipConcepts.net)), a Philadelphia area based coaching and leadership development firm. He works with small-business owners, executives, managers, entrepreneurs, and service professionals to help them significantly increase their performance, productivity, and profitability.

Clients range from small entrepreneurial businesses to larger corporations including many professional service firms, coaches, consultants, attorneys, therapists, and psychologists who are seeking to grow their business. In addition, Dr. Morgan coaches business and professionals in career transition, assisting them to bring about increased alignment between their career and their own individuality.

Prior to entering the field of coaching, he was a psychologist in private practice and for a major counseling organization. His experience also includes work in community agencies, hospitals, and as director of human resource development.

Dr. Morgan has a doctorate in clinical psychology and has been adjunct faculty at two universities. He regularly speaks to groups throughout the United States on increasing personal and career effectiveness and presenting business and leadership enhancing training workshops

## Want to reach more of your full potential?

Dealing with the negative beliefs that hold you back will help with that. In this special report are guides for this and helpful tips and techniques for achieving greater “fitness for the mind.”

Should you decide you would like to work with a coach after you have completed this report, please call me at Leadership Concepts (610) 687-7615.

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Best Wishes Always,

Dr. Bill Morgan  
*Bringing Out the Best in People*

# Fitness for the Mind: Dealing with Negative Beliefs That Hold You Back

by William Morgan

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

In this special report I would like to share with you some of the things I have learned in working with people to help them to be more satisfied and effective in their career and personal life. I am going to share some ideas about “fitness for the mind.” Just as physical fitness is important to our well being, so mental fitness is critical to our satisfaction in life and reaching our full potential.

Did you watch the 2004 Summer Olympics? I saw something that really inspired me. Maybe you saw it too. It was the performance of Paul Hamm in the men’s gymnastics all-around competition. An American had never won the gold medal for the best all-around men’s gymnast in the Olympics. But, Paul was actually favored to win. And halfway through the competition, he was in first place. But then something disastrous happened. He stumbled on the landing of his vault, and actually crashed into the judge’s table. He immediately dropped from 1<sup>st</sup> place to 12<sup>th</sup> place, and likely out of medalling. But, although the best he thought he could do was the bronze medal, after this tremendous setback, he did not give up. Minutes later, he was performing again. You could see the determination all over his face. His remaining performances were outstanding. As a result, he not only medalled, but Paul did what seemed to be impossible. He won the gold medal. Even he couldn’t believe it when he was told. Paul Hamm proved he was not only physically fit, but also mentally fit.

The fact is that people are capable of achieving more than they think is possible to achieve. The only reason they don’t is that they get caught up in limiting beliefs and assumptions, or because they get discouraged and want to give up.

Picture the 1960’s. The days of black and white TV, where maybe you got reception on 3 channels—ABC, NBC, and CBS. And music was on those large black vinyl discs. All this seems so low tech today, doesn’t it?

It was the Cold War era, and America was actually behind in the Space Race at first. Kennedy was President. The Russians actually put the first man in space. Yuri Gagarin was the cosmonaut who made that historic flight. Shortly after this, President Kennedy knew a bold step was needed. He announced to the country—and to the world—that within ten years America would put a man on the moon! While exciting, this seemed impossible to achieve. But America did achieve this step, and it resulted in accelerated developments in technology and new power and prestige for America.

**People are capable of achieving more than they think possible. But limiting beliefs can hold them back.**

I am told that when baby elephants are born, their trainers tie a rope to a pole or stake planted securely in the ground and then tie the other end to the baby elephant. The elephant quickly learns that when the rope is tied to it, it can't go anywhere. By the time it becomes an adult, and is very strong and powerful and can easily rip the stake out of the ground, the elephant can still be tied to a small stake. It doesn't even try to escape—because it has been conditioned to believe that when the rope is tied to it, it can't go anywhere.

**That's what limiting beliefs do to us—hold us back. Negative, erroneous, self-limiting beliefs—and we all have them sometimes—hold us back from freely moving toward what we really want and are capable of accomplishing in our lives.**

In the following pages, I am going to discuss a concept based on a cutting edge model of psychology that can revolutionize and rejuvenate a person's movement towards what he or she truly wants in life. It's something that can unlock your potential, and give you greater confidence and vigor towards important actions and goals. I am convinced that this concept lies at the heart of many blockages in growth and achievement. It is one of the biggest and most common obstacles to satisfaction and success.

## PART 2: THE COGNITIVE MODEL

Researchers in psychology tell us that our emotions and behavior are influenced and determined not so much by the situations and events that occur in our lives, but by the views and thinking or “self talk” that we have about ourselves and what happens to us. During the course of a typical day, we have about sixty thousand thoughts which come and go so rapidly that we are seldom aware of what we are saying to ourselves. Some of these thoughts are rational and realistic. But, being human, some of our thoughts are irrational and unrealistic. Some of these thoughts set us up to “win” in life. But many of them may keep us from realizing our potential. These are the negative thoughts that hold us back from greater success, fulfillment, and realizing our full potential.

**Situation** ➡ **Thinking** ➡ **Emotions & Behaviors**

### Limiting Beliefs

**Question: Where does negative self-talk come from?**

In most cases it is possible to trace negative thinking back to deeper-lying mistaken beliefs or assumptions about ourselves, others, and life in general. While growing up we learned them from our parents, teachers, and peers as well as from the society around us. These beliefs are so basic to our thinking that we do not recognize them as beliefs at all—we just take them for granted and assume they are accurate. I find that these beliefs often hold people back in life, so I like the term “Limiting Beliefs.”

**Situation** ➡ **Thinking** ➡ **Emotions & Behaviors**  
 ↑  
**Underlying Beliefs**  
**(Limiting Beliefs)**

**Examples of “Limiting Beliefs” include:**

“If I take a risk I will fail”

“I am powerless”

“I’m not good enough”

“Its too hard to accomplish what I want”

“I’m nothing if I don’t succeed”

“I’m nothing unless others love and approve of me”

“I must do it perfectly or it’s not worth bothering to try”

“I don’t have the talent to succeed”

“I don’t deserve what I truly want”

“I can’t speak in front of an audience”

As I work with people to help them to be more successful or fulfilled in their life, I find there are often unproductive, limiting ideas littering many a mind. These Limiting Beliefs block people from taking action towards the positive results they want.

One client, Randy, was unemployed and involved in a job search. We identified networking as a key strategy for him, but he seemed blocked in getting in action in his networking. As we talked about it, it became clear that a Limiting Belief was holding him back. His belief was “People will think less of me and reject me if I ask them for help.” So, he was held back in making networking contacts.

Another client, Laura, an attorney, was working on starting a private practice, but something kept her from getting in action on ordering her business cards and other steps in getting her practice built. Again, it was a Limiting Belief she held—“I’m not good enough. I don’t have good skills.” We worked on changing this belief. She finally got her cards, and the next day three people asked her for her card.

### **Characteristics of Limiting Beliefs**

Although negative and inaccurate, they seem plausible and feel right. They are not evidence-based. Rather, they are assumptions—not reality. They have a limiting effect on us—they hold us back from positive action and full expression of our potential.

Just because you think something doesn’t mean it is true or you should believe it. What deserves belief is what is realistic and what points to the best part of you.

### **Activity: Identifying Limiting Beliefs**

Right now, I would like for you to pause for a moment, turn inward, and reflect on your own life to see if you can begin to identify any Limiting Beliefs that you hold.

Ask yourself right now, “What is it I really want in life? What would I attempt to do if I knew I could not fail?” If you don’t yet have what you want, why not? List the reasons you come up with. What ideas or attitudes are involved? What is the assumption? What negative, Limiting Belief may sometimes hold you back?

Take a few minutes to seriously reflect on this and write down your answer. In the process of doing this activity, you may discover certain beliefs or assumptions that have been holding you back. Just recognizing your own particular Limiting Beliefs is the first and most important step toward letting go of them.

## **PART 3: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE AND GROWTH**

Beliefs determine actions you are willing to take. Limiting Beliefs can corral you and stop you from having what you really want. Limiting Beliefs keep you frozen, inactive, and limit your potential.

In this next segment, we will look at several practical, effective ways that you can re-channel Limiting Beliefs into Expanding Beliefs that will fuel you to greater success and fulfillment. We will look at how to change thoughts that can change the action we take and therefore the result we get. It is possible to “train the brain” to serve you better.

### **Expanding Beliefs**

Your deeply held beliefs shape what you make of any situation. They can color how you see things. Question: If you look at a lemon through blue colored lenses, what color is the lemon? Answer: Trick question. Did you think green? If you look at a lemon through blue colored lenses, the lemon is still yellow.

But in a similar way, your beliefs shape and influence how you see any situation. They are the lenses you look at life through. Depending on whether your beliefs are limiting or expanding, you will find either a roadblock or a possibility. The good news is that when you recognize a Limiting Belief, it can be re-channeled into an Expanding Belief, one that can propel you to a better future.

Randy, the client who was unemployed and in a job search, was held back by the Limiting Belief that “People will think less of me and reject me if I ask for help.” Together we worked on revising that belief to be more accurate and helpful. The Expanding Belief became “Most people would like to help me if I give them the opportunity.” Knowing Randy, this was true. This new belief led to effective networking action.

In this next part, you will learn how to bring forth more productive thinking that will help you get what you want. We will look at some strategies to re-channel your beliefs into a course that will move you forward in life. We will discuss some techniques to “train the brain” to recognize Limiting Beliefs you may be holding and change them to Expanding Beliefs.

## **How to Re-channel Limiting Beliefs into Expanding Beliefs**

### **Countering Limiting Beliefs**

Just recognizing your own particular Limiting Beliefs is the first and most important step toward letting go of them. The second step is to counter Limiting Beliefs and to continue to impress this new thinking on your mind until Limiting Beliefs are re-channeled into Expanding Beliefs. Here is a 4 step process for doing this—for changing a Limiting Belief into an Expanding Belief.

## **How to Change Limiting Beliefs Into Expanding Beliefs: A 4-Step Process**

### **Step 1: Identify the Limiting Belief**

A short time ago, you reflected and explored what your own Limiting Beliefs might be by answering some questions. Some additional techniques for this might include: Whenever you say or do something that is counterproductive to getting what you want in life, take it as an opportunity to develop greater awareness. Ask: “What leads you to say/do that?” “What thinking is behind that?” By doing this, you may bring the Limiting Belief to the surface. It may help to have a friend or coach engage you in a dialogue to help you identify the Limiting Belief.

Limiting Beliefs have more power when you are unaware of them. This lack of awareness keeps people trapped. Identifying them is the start to changing them.

### **Step 2: Test the Limiting Belief for Validity or Usefulness**

Challenge and question the belief. Is the belief based on good evidence? What led you to conclude this belief? What objective evidence do you have to support this belief? What evidence is there against this belief? Is it useful? What are the results you are getting looking at things that way? These are the sorts of questions you can ask to test a belief. When you do so, you are likely to find that there is little or no evidence for the Limiting Belief.

### **Step 3: Revise the Belief**

In this step we find a better way to look at things and restate the Limiting Belief as an Expanding Belief.

**Examples:**Instead of thinking:

I never win  
 I am not good enough  
 I'll fail  
 People will reject me  
 I'll never succeed

You might think:

I can be successful.  
 I am right where I need to be.  
 I can do this.  
 I am a likeable person.  
 Setbacks are only temporary,  
 nothing can stop me from  
 succeeding.

When Limiting Beliefs are changed to Expanding Beliefs, there is a whole new dynamic mindset, a visible change in people's attitudes and actions.

**Activity: Creating Expanding Beliefs**

Before going on to the fourth step, I would like to give you the opportunity to create an Expanding Belief for yourself that will propel you forward in your life and work.

**Exercise:**

Go back to your list of Limiting Beliefs that you identified earlier. Which one is the most problematic for you?

For this Limiting Belief, write down what price you pay by having this belief. What poor result does it get you? What does it hold you back from?

Now, write down a result or outcome you would like for your life.

Ask yourself what belief (Expanding Belief) you think would spawn the action necessary to take effective action toward this result/goal. Write down your Expanding Beliefs.

Look at what you just wrote. Does it make you feel excited and challenged? Is it realistic? Then this is your new Expanding Belief.

**You are the author of your Beliefs. You may not have chosen what has happened to you in life, but you constructed what your experiences mean to you. You can revise the Limiting Beliefs that hold you back to be Expanding Beliefs that fuel you forward.**

## Step 4: Train the Brain

When you have been married to a set of beliefs for a long time, they are familiar to you and seem right at a gut level—even if intellectually you know they are not true. They become “mental habits” which can be deeply entrenched and difficult to change. But, you can train yourself to think differently—to solidify the Expanding Belief until it is natural to your thinking.

### How to “Train the Brain” and Solidify Expanding Beliefs

Let me share with you 5 methods to “Train the brain” and solidify Expanding Beliefs:

1. Evidence: One technique is to look at the evidence. Actively look for and focus on evidence for the Expanding Belief. Keep track of confirming evidence. The mind is a funny thing. It often only notices and focuses on evidence that confirms our familiar Limiting Beliefs. Try to actively counter that.

2. Affirmations: A second technique is to Develop Affirmation Statements

Guidelines for constructing an affirmation:

An affirmation should be a short, simple, direct statement of your Expanding Belief. Examples: “I believe in myself.” “I can do this.” “I am a good coach.” “I am confident in myself.” Avoid negatives. The mind responds better to positive statements. So, state the affirmation in the positive.

It is important that you have some belief in—or willingness to believe in—your affirmations. However, it is not necessary to believe in an affirmation 100% when you first start out. The whole point is that rehearsing affirmations will shift your beliefs toward your Expanding Beliefs.

3. A third way to train the brain is to—rehearse your affirmations daily, repeatedly, and with feeling. Attach it to your bathroom mirror, your refrigerator, or other conspicuous place in your home, where you will see it and be prompted to rehearse it.

4. Act according to the Expanding Belief. Act as if you believe it. As they say, “Fake it till you make it.” Another saying I like is “It is easier to act yourself into a new way of feeling than it is to feel you way into a new way of acting.”

5. Visualization: Winners visualize winning. So, Fantasize, imagine, dream. See yourself doing it.

## **PART 4: CONCLUSION**

Now you are on your way to dealing with the negative beliefs that hold you back and reaching more of your full potential.

### **Blocks to Success:**

Last thing, I would like to share some thoughts about why many people don't shed their Limiting Beliefs and reach their full potential. Here are two reasons I find why many people fail to re-channel Limiting Beliefs into Expanding Beliefs and change their thinking patterns:

#### **1. Lack of Awareness**

People often don't see the connection between their feelings and actions and their thinking patterns. They don't recognize when a Limiting Belief is operating. So, it's important to take time to reflect on what is going on in your thinking when you are not seeing the results you want.

#### **2. Lack of follow-through on changing. They don't make the time and effort to practice.**

Imagine when you were a teenager you had a nice uncle who taught you how to play golf. Though he wasn't a great player, he showed you the basics. Then, when you got to be however old you are now, you found yourself playing with friends whose skills were much better, and you decided to take some lessons from a pro to get up to their level. During your lesson the golf pro shows you some ways to improve your swing, some changes you need to make. You leave with the knowledge that these changes will improve your game. A few days later, you are out playing golf with your friends again. Now, how are you going to tend to swing at first, the new way or the old way? Probably the old way still, right? What will it take to get the new swing to be automatic? Practice. Mental Fitness is like physical fitness. It comes with practice.

I hope that I have exposed you to a variety of ideas about reaching your full potential in life. So now I'd like to ask you to think about what you've learned and ask yourself:

**What goals would you aim for if you really believed in yourself?**

**We hope this special report has provided you with stimulating thoughts and ideas about how you can position yourself to realize more of your full potential.**

**The next step is to take action and find someone to hold you accountable.**

**The author would love to hear about how this special report has inspired you or helped you act on your ideas. You can reach him using the information below.**

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Dr. Morgan is also available to speak at your organization.

## About Leadership Concepts

**Leadership Concepts** is all about helping businesses and individuals become more effective and successful in reaching their goals. Leadership Concepts provides coaching and consulting services to corporations and businesses, executives, managers, professionals, entrepreneurs, and business owners. The focus of Leadership Concepts is on accelerated growth, development and change, making progress towards goals easier and faster than would otherwise be possible.

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