

## **French-Burgess Six Step Belief Change System**

You are probably already well aware of the power of goal setting. Setting goals, having a clear outcome, knowing what you want – these are always emphasised in personal and professional development approaches as crucial activities if you really want to go places and move forwards in life and in business.

So how is it that, even after we have set the clear goal, made the new year resolution, found out what we need to do and how to do it, in certain areas at certain times, we can still find ourselves making little progress or moving forwards very slowly. How is it that sometimes, when we set that New Year resolution, we have a definite feeling of *deja vue*? Our goals might seem a little familiar or even very familiar because we realise that we set the same goals last year and the year before and that progress has been non-existent or minimal.

If any of the above is resonating with you personally or if you know people who have had these kinds of experiences and you want to help them to move forwards, this article is perfect for you because we are going to share with you some very simple, effective steps that you can apply immediately in any situation to help you (or to help you to help others) to achieve goals and resolutions much more quickly, consistently and effectively.

Years ago, when we first started to get into personal development, over and over again we would come across the message that a crucial ingredient in making something happen is to believe it! You may have come across car manufacturer Henry Ford's famous quote 'if you believe you can or you believe you can't, you are right!'. What that means is that if you believe you can do something, that positive belief will open the gates on your resources giving you the best possible chance of success. If you don't believe that you can do something, no matter how resourceful you are, the gates will be shut and that is going to make it much more difficult for you to achieve your goal.

So we really got the message that believing is important, and of course it is!

The trouble was, we had an unanswered question back then that went something like this. What if I want something very much and I don't happen to believe it very strongly or I have all kinds of doubts instead? The 'how to' was not offered – we were only told that believing it was a very important thing to have in place.

So over the years we have made it our mission to discover and to develop some really practical, easy-to-apply steps to help you to actually make the transition from doubts to more helpful achievement-focused beliefs. What follows in this article is one of our tried and tested routes to making the internal changes required for you to really believe in what you want to achieve. It is a six-step 'How to' guide for actually adding in one of those all-important success ingredients, namely 'Believe it!'

## **Step 1 – Decide what you DO want**

Sometimes a positive change starts by noticing and attending to what is *not* wanted and some people can get the high motivation they need to move them away from the thing or state they don't want so this can often be useful as a starting point. Dwelling on this can also tend to trigger less resourceful states such as anxiety or overwhelm and sometimes this gets people feeling 'stuck'.

So to move forward successfully it is also very important to get facing the right direction by proactively answering the question 'so what **do** I want?'

Motorcycling and skiing provide great examples of how we will tend to get more of what we are focusing on. If a person fills their mind with where they do *not* want their motorcycle or skis to take them (in the case of a motorcyclist, focusing on the kerb or the parked car, or the lamp post, or in the case of a skier, focusing on the tree, the precipice or the queue of people at the bottom of the slope!) then it is like every cell of their body is instructing their motorcycle or skis to take them to that very place! It is like the equipment knows! And of course in a way it does because your mind controls your body which controls the equipment! So focusing on what you *do* want will begin to send more helpful instructions to every cell of your body as to where to steer you next.

### ***Exercise:***

***Decide on something that you do want right now and write it down. It could be one of those recurring resolutions or a goal where you may have been feeling stuck. We are going to use this goal as the basis for applying all of the forthcoming steps.***

## **Step 2 – The Beliefs Audit**

The beliefs and assumptions that we hold are just generalisations or structures in thinking. They are just representations of what is 'out there' and these representations may be serving us or keeping us stuck. Of course our own beliefs seem very real to us (we believe in them!) and we treat them as if they are actually true. That's because we are focusing our attention on just some (only a small amount) of the vast amount of information that is available and deleting/overlooking all kinds of other information. The good news is that we know that beliefs can and do change, particularly when we start to give ourselves full permission to notice 'new' information.

Step 2 in this process offers you the opportunity to do the most valuable audit of your life! An audit of the 'inner stuff' that we call beliefs.

In this audit, rather than evaluating your beliefs as 'true' or 'false' or 'right' or 'wrong', we suggest that you evaluate your beliefs as either 'helpful beliefs' (because they are smoothing the way to you achieving your goal) or 'unhelpful beliefs' (because they are getting in the way of you achieving your goal)

## **Exercise:**

***It's time to start to get curious about what's going on in there! On a blank sheet of paper draw a line down the middle so that you have two columns. At the top of one column write 'unhelpful beliefs' and at the top of the other column write 'helpful beliefs'. Now, thinking of your goal, allow your beliefs and assumptions (those things that you think you know) to bubble up to the surface. They may be beliefs about how possible your goal is to achieve, how easy or difficult it is, how capable you believe you are, They may be beliefs about other people, beliefs about the timescale required to achieve, or beliefs about what things mean. Write as many as you can in each column and then looking at the 'unhelpful' column, circle the belief that you feel is the most significantly unhelpful or 'in the way'.***

## **Step 3 - The skill of 'what ifing'**

Human beings have very many skills and one of them is the skill that we call 'what ifing' (or asking 'what if' questions.) The only problem is that many of the 'what if' questions that we tend to ask are unhelpful. For example we tend to ask questions like 'what if it doesn't work?', 'what if they don't like me?', 'what if I fall flat on my face?'

These kinds of questions are very often unhelpful (unless of course they are purposefully asked as part of a project management process in order to reach great solutions). If, when you have asked these kinds of 'what if' questions, it invoked self-doubt or anxiety, it is likely that it closed the gates on your resources and may have made you feel 'stuck'.

Of course the power of 'what ifing' that can keep a person 'stuck' can also be channelled in a positive direction to open up the person's resource gates and free them to move forward excitedly.

In this step, the intention is to come up with a list of positive alternative 'what if' questions that will begin to open the gates on your resources. When the questions are deliberately asked with the right tonality on the inside (eg excited curiosity), you will notice your beliefs starting to shift as your thinking begins to steer in a more helpful direction. The questions help you to begin to uncover alternative possibilities and as you ask them to yourself, you may notice a part of you beginning to recognise elements that could be true.

## **Exercise:**

***Working with the one significant unhelpful belief that you have circled (in the audit), now come up with as many positive alternative questions as you can. For example, if your unhelpful belief was 'this is going to be difficult' you might start to come up with positive alternative questions such as 'what if it's easier than I think? 'What if it's just the first step that seems difficult, and the next steps get easier and easier? 'What if I've got all the resources to make it easy?' 'What if it is just like another time when something seemed difficult and turned out to be easier than I had expected?'***

## **Step 4 – The Debate**

Although, having applied the first three steps of the process, you will probably already begin to notice your beliefs shifting positively, you may still need to build up some evidence to support the new potential beliefs contained in your helpful 'what if' questions.

'The debate' provides opportunities for you to solidify your new thinking so that you can add supporting 'legs' to your new beliefs.

As a participant in a debate (the kind of debate that you would find in a debating society) you would very likely be given a random subject to argue and even though you may not believe in the subject, it would be your job to come up with as many arguments as you could to convince the judges that your position was the most believable. Solid evidence and convincing argument can be found in the most outlandish of positions (after all, when you think about it, people have often formed the most ridiculous and unhelpful beliefs in the first place and successfully defended them for years).

### ***Exercise:***

***Take one of your favourite positive 'what if' questions and cross out the words 'what if' at the beginning and add the word 'because....' at the end. For example, the question 'what if it's easier than I think?' would become 'It's easier than I think because....'***

***Now complete the statement with as much supporting evidence as you can think of.***

***Allow yourself to say the arguments out loud whilst deliberately using the tonality of conviction and certainty as though your life depended on convincing people that the position is true. The more you engage in full-on selling of the position, the more your physiology and your mind will be accepting the possibility as a feasible one. Repetition and speaking out loud will make the case for the new position, with increasing conviction in the tonality and with full permission to add in extra evidence as it begins to occur to you.***

## **Step 5 – Mental Rehearsal**

Now that your new perceptions are beginning to become more believable, we need to start to literally programme them in by turning the 'evidence' into an experience. Many top sports people disclose that they frequently (and sometimes continuously) use mental rehearsal/visualisation of them 'winning' as a key psychological process in preparation for top level achievement. A few years ago we interviewed Olympic gold medallist, Sally Gunnel, to discover what mental preparation she had done before the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. She told us that, after she had not achieved what she knew she was capable of in the previous Olympics, she knew she had to do something different. She decided to include much more mental preparation in her training schedule and for over twelve months before the Olympic Games, each and every day, several times a day she visualised herself winning the race. That kind of preparation takes real commitment and of course gets results because you are filling your mind, over and over again, with the experiences that you intend to create for

yourself. This intense programming activity adds more supporting 'legs' to the enticing 'possibilities' and turns them into solid 'beliefs'!

## **Exercise:**

***Now take the time to schedule into your diary time for mental rehearsal/visualisation. Experiment with what works best for you and allow yourself to imagine the scenario/s that you decided upon in step 1. You can do this by filling your mind with internal movies of the whole experience you want to have. Give yourself a remote control changing the finer details of the pictures, the sounds, the feelings, and any other information that is useful to notice. Play the movies that give you the best feelings over and over again and enjoy! Also weave into the experiences that you are rehearsing all of the evidence that you have captured in step 4 that support the possibilities you raised in step 3. Be playful with this process – enjoy rehearsing your success!***

## **Step 6 – Empowering Roles for Action**

This final step in the process is about getting out there armed with new perspectives and taking the actions that will allow you to attract the 'real' evidence that these new beliefs are true.

So often people will 'raise the bar' on their performance when they step into particular roles. We have all heard of those extraordinary stories when an old granny has found themselves in the position of playing the role of 'life saver' and has ended up performing an outstanding feat like ripping a car door open to get to and rescue their grand children!

The role we assign ourselves consciously or unconsciously in any moment has a massive effect on the resources we access and what we ultimately achieve. Often when we are being a 'role model' to someone (for example as a parent, boss, trainer or demonstrator of excellent practice) it brings out the absolute best in us. The great news is that we can step into an empowering role by imagining having the right people with us so we can go about being an example of excellence for them. We have tested this in lots of different contexts and it works an absolute treat!

On a personal note, we regularly take 'imaginary friends' out with us when we are coaching, training or delivering keynote speeches. Imagining having trainee coaches, or less experienced trainers and speakers with us, people who are learning from and modelling our every word and action will inevitably 'raise our bar' and enables us to open the gates on our resources, helping us to really shine!

## **Exercise:**

***Now take the time to consider this question: who would you be being a role model to in order to raise the bar on your performance and open the gates on your resources? We encourage you to experiment with this in your imagination and do whatever works to become really practiced at being the best role model that you can be!***

Sometimes people like to go back and repeat steps as they work through the process. Each of the steps is powerful in itself and so please do experiment with dipping in to any of the steps in isolation, as sometimes just doing one of these activities is enough to create a major shift in perception and belief and then performance.

We encourage you to have fun with the process and play!

We love to hear about the successes that people have with the process so please do drop us an email as you notice beliefs changing in positive and permanent ways!

And of course, if you have any questions, we are here to help - so get in touch!

With our warmest intentions for you

Julie and Tony

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## **Tony Burgess**

Tony Burgess is a Director of the Academy of High Achievers.

Tony has a degree in Psychology; he is a qualified teacher, hypnotist, psychotherapist, firewalk instructor and Master Practitioner in NLP.

As an experienced professional speaker, trainer and coach, most of Tony's time is now spent designing, co-ordinating and delivering personal and professional success programmes for people who are hungry to enjoy life to the max and experience the very best of themselves. He has worked with business leaders, teams within organisations, educators, entrepreneurs, students, sports people and members of the public to help them to tap into and release the full potential of their personal resources, allowing them to attain whatever outcomes they set out to achieve and much more besides. Before becoming a founding Director of Academy of High Achievers, Tony ran his own separate successful coaching and training company.

Tony is someone who treats life well and as a result life treats him well too.

He is particularly passionate about promoting 'authentic' living because so many 'successful' people are hiding their true selves behind 'masks' that are part of their conditioning. Tony promotes the view that life becomes easier, more open and honest when the 'masks' are off and people begin to shine as they really are.

## **Julie French**

Julie French is a Director of the Academy of High Achievers.

Julie is an outstanding Executive Coach, NLP Master Practitioner, Certified Trainer of NLP, Fire walking Instructor and a Certified Professional Speaker. She draws on many years experience as a senior manager in corporate organisations. As an experienced coach, trainer, facilitator and presenter, Julie's clients range from Directors in large corporations to business owners and entrepreneurs. Combining exceptional listening skills with a creative and empowering approach, Julie has assisted hundreds of organisations and individuals to get more of what they want more quickly and more effectively.

Julie loves life and one of her great characteristics is in 'exploding warmth' wherever she goes