

# CHAPTER SIX

## **Beliefs: I Do What I Believe I Can Do**

One person with a belief is equal to a force of ninety-nine who have only interests.

—*John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)*  
*British philosopher and writer*

Now I come to a very important obstacle to effective memory that has to do with my belief system. Becoming aware of this obstacle and doing something about it helps me to improve my memory. But more than that, it points the way to many areas of self-discovery and opens the door to the possibility of mind reading.

### **My Beliefs and My Self-Talk**

Recall my discussion of “self-talk” when I was covering the basics of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). We are all constantly engaged in self-talk. Whether I am listening to someone speak, listening to a radio, watching and listening to something on television, or just sitting and doing nothing, I am continuously talking to myself in my mind—I am engaged in self-talk all of my waking day.

And much of that self-talk is focused on beliefs about myself, about other people, about the nature of things that happen in the world around me.

Those beliefs lead me to make a lot of assumptions about my world—about the way it works, about people, about myself, about what I can and cannot do. These assumptions influence the choices I make and therefore the actions I take or do not take.

Consider an example directly related to memory. Suppose I was one of those people who say, “I just can’t remember names!” That statement would be a direct reflection of my self-talk—my internal belief I just cannot ever remember names. If I go around telling myself I can’t remember names, chances are I never will be able to remember names! Without realizing it, I will have limited my ability.

Sociologists call this “self-fulfilling prophecy,” which means as I believe it to be, so shall it become. When I believe I will never be able to do something (prophecy), I become incapable of doing it (self-fulfilling).

The other side of the coin, of course, is if I believe I *will* be able to do something, chances are I will find a way to do it—the self-fulfilling prophecy! That’s why so many books and articles on the power of positive thinking are so popular—they help people to achieve powerful shifts in their thinking and therefore their actions or behaviors they might not otherwise achieve. My beliefs become self-fulfilling. However, I’ve concluded that no amount of *positive thinking* alone will ever help me to achieve anything without fueling my thoughts with *positive action!*

## **Caught in the Classic Vicious Belief Cycle**

Do I believe I can change a longtime belief/habit/addiction? If I think “yes,” then I am already free from a barrier that stops many people from changing. If I think “no,” then I may not realize that I, and no one else, stopped me from developing my ability to make a choice to change.

Once again, the power of negative beliefs rears its unwelcome head. When I believe I really don’t have the capacity to change, I will fail every time I try to change—remember the “self-fulfilling prophecy”?

Here’s how it goes. I make a few tentative attempts at changing a habit, and at the first sign of failure—the first time I can’t accomplish my goal—I say to myself, “I just don’t do