



Can You Believe It?

By Vic Johnson

“Belief is the basis of all action, and this being so, the belief that dominates the hearts or mind is shown in the life.” - James Allen (Above Life’s Turmoil)

William James, the great psychologist and writer of the early twentieth century, said, “Belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that will guarantee the success of any venture.” You will rarely attempt something you don’t believe possible and you will

NEVER give 100% of your ability to something you don’t believe in.

One of the best known stories about the power of belief is about Roger Bannister, the first person to run a mile in under four minutes. Before his accomplishment, it was generally believed that the human body was incapable of such a feat. Bannister, a medical student, held another belief. “Fueled by my faith in my training, I will overcome all obstacles. I am brave! I am not afraid to face anyone on the track. I believe this is not a dream. It is my reality.”

As soon as he broke the barrier, belief about the feat changed and his record only lasted 46 days. Within two years more than fifty people also ran a sub-four-minute mile. Thousands have done so since. Today it’s not uncommon for it to be done by a talented high-schooler. What happened in 1954 that hadn’t happened in the previous 6,000 years of humankind that allowed Bannister to achieve this? It was not the human body which changed; the human belief system did!

Perhaps my favorite story about belief was written by Cynthia Kersey. In *Unstoppable* she told about a college student, George Dantzig who always studied late into the night. He overslept one morning, arriving 20 minutes late for class. He saw two math problems on the board and quickly copied them down, assuming they were the homework assignment. It took him several days to work through the two problems. Finally he had a breakthrough and dropped the homework on the professor’s desk.

Later, George was awakened at 6 a.m. by his excited professor. Since George had been late for class, he hadn’t heard the professor announce that the two unsolvable equations on the board were mathematical mind teasers that even Einstein had not been able to answer. But George Dantzig, BELIEVING that he was working on just ordinary homework problems, had

solved not one, but two problems that had stumped mathematicians for thousands of years.

How many great things could you achieve if you just “believed” they were doable?

Some years ago I was listening to a friend speaking to a business audience. She quoted a teaching by David Schwartz from *The Magic of Thinking Big* that rocked my life. She said, “The size of your success is determined by the size of your belief.” Now that was the first personal development book I ever read and I’ve read it at least 20 times since. I’m sure that I had heard that concept many times before that night. But it impacted me so much that I wrote it down and must have looked at it a hundred times or more in the thirty days after that.

I spent the next few months focused on strengthening my belief in myself and in what I wanted to do. I took to heart what Wayne Dyer wrote in *You’ll See It When You Believe It*: “Work each day on your thoughts rather than concentrating on your behavior. It is your thinking that creates the feelings that you have and ultimately your actions as well.” So I worked each day on my beliefs by constantly affirming myself using written and verbal affirmations. The years since have been an incredible rocket ride.

Lest you think it’s that easy, you should know that I WORKED HARD on my “belief thinking.” The work dominated my life at that time because I was determined to change my beliefs. It is a lot like physical exercise: the more you do the stronger you become. I love what Emmet Fox wrote: “If you will change your mind concerning anything and absolutely keep it changed, that thing must and will change too. It is the keeping up of the change in thought that is difficult. It calls for vigilance and determination.”

Quite frankly, that’s where most people miss the boat. They either half-heartedly try to change their belief systems or they don’t stick with it long enough. Wallace D. Wattles wrote “There is no labor from which most people shrink as they do from that of sustained and consecutive thought; it is the hardest work in the world.” And yet it is the “sustained and consecutive thought” that is the first and primary labor of achievement.

Nightingale-Conant says Napoleon Hill is considered to have influenced more people into success than any other person in history. And his most quoted line from *Think and Grow Rich* describes the power of belief, “Whatever your mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” Just believing that statement, truly believing it deep down inside, is a bold step toward living your dreams.

Lisa Jimenez, in her great book *Conquer Fear!* writes, “Change your beliefs and you change your behaviors. Change your behaviors and you change your results. Change your results and you change your life.”

So how do you change your belief system?

1. Prepare to win. Nothing will strengthen your belief system more than knowing you're prepared. His pre-race training was the key to Bannister's belief that he could achieve his goal. Remember his words, “Fueled by my faith in my training, I will overcome all obstacles.”
2. Take control of your thoughts. It's your choice what you think about. Think success and that's what you get. Think failure and that's what you attract. To help in controlling your thoughts, make it a habit to affirm yourself. I had a box of business cards with an old address that I was going to discard. Instead, I flipped them over to the blank side and wrote affirmations on them. I had two identical sets, one for my car and one for my office. Throughout the day I would read my “flash cards” aloud. (If you're in your car, only read while you're stopped for a traffic light :-)
3. Re-evaluate your situation. One of my mentors, Bob Proctor, teaches that “our belief system is based on our evaluation of something. Frequently when we re-evaluate a situation, our belief about that situation will change.” And when you re-evaluate, spend more time looking at the positive side of your circumstances. In *Why Some Positive Thinkers Get Positive Results*, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale says, “Never build a case against yourself.”
4. Don't worry about “how-to-do-it.” One of my early mistakes was trying to figure out *how* I was going to do something before I'd believe I *could* do it. Dr. Schwartz, again in *The Magic of Thinking Big*, writes, “Belief, strong belief, triggers the mind to figuring ways and means and how-to... those who believe they can move mountains, do. Those who believe they can't, cannot. Belief triggers the power to do.”

Interestingly, Dr. Schwartz wrote in 1959, “Currently, there is some talk of building a tunnel under the English Channel to connect England with the Continent. Whether this tunnel is ever built depends on whether responsible people believe it can be built.” Even though they had no idea of “how-to-do-it” at the time, enough “responsible people” maintained a belief in this project and we have the famous Chunnel today.

5. Finally, you must act. The New Testament writer said, “Faith without works is dead.” Until you act, you're not committed and belief is not

cemented. As Goethe wrote, “Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.” Your action and commitment will be greatly rewarded, for as he goes on to say, “Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred.”

What great challenge lies in your path today? Do you sincerely want to overcome or accomplish it? If the answer is yes, then CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? Can you believe the magic is really in YOU!

Recently I was dramatically impressed by a passage in *The Message of a Master* by John McDonald. It sums up the reason why most of us don't have the belief to succeed:

“The cause of the confusion prevailing in your mind that weakens your thoughts is the false belief that there is a power or powers outside you greater than the power within you.”

And that's worth thinking about.



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