

RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCES

This *daily* exercise (adapted from *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Interpersonal Problems* by McKay, Lev, and Skeen, 2012) will reinforce the mindfulness skills presented in chapter 4 of *Love Me, Don't Leave Me*. By staying present in the moment you will be able to resist the unhelpful behavioral action urge that emerges when your core beliefs get triggered. Consistency and frequency are essential when you are creating new helpful behaviors.

Think of a recent relationship experience that triggered a core belief, and record your responses to the following.

Event:

Core belief emotions:

Core belief thoughts:

Physical sensations:

Core belief-driven urges:

Acted on a behavioral urge? If yes, what was your behavioral reaction? If no, what was your alternative response?

This exercise will help you stay connected to the new knowledge that you have about your experiences. You are getting triggered because of your core beliefs, which are rooted in real experiences and traumas that left you fearful and reacting in ways that were designed to protect you. You now know that your core beliefs and the automatic behaviors that emerge from them are making you feel worse about yourself and are damaging your relationships. Practicing mindfulness when your core beliefs are triggered keeps you remaining present to your experiences—along with the changing emotions, thoughts, and sensations—without resorting to fear-based behavioral reactions. When you are stuck in your story, you are disconnected from your present experience and you are reacting to your past experience.