

FOREWORD

My family's Toltec teachings come from a long oral tradition—accumulated wisdom shared down through the generations in the form of stories and anecdotes. One of the most beautiful elements of any tradition of knowledge is that when a student takes its lessons to heart, and begins to practice, the knowledge is transformed through experience. Through experience, knowledge becomes real wisdom and the lessons become truth in practice. And so a tradition evolves. As each generation of teachers shares its version they adapt the knowledge into new lessons for understanding life in the modern world. In this way the ancient traditions remain alive and relevant for the next group of students who are anxious for change and willing to listen.

Ray Dodd and I have the same teacher, my father, don Miguel Ruiz, MD, and we have approached what we have learned in ways as unique as the directions our lives have taken us. I first met Ray when I was in my early twenties. When he began his Toltec apprenticeship with my father, Ray was already well on his way in his own career: first in music, then in engineering, and finally in business. The result of the fusion of his paths into one is reflected in his

book, *The Toltec Secret to Happiness: Create Lasting Change with the Power of Belief*.

As Ray discovered his voice, he focused his attention on the singular topic of transforming self-limiting beliefs as an effective way to achieve lasting change. The material for the book you now hold in your hands is the foundation for the Power of Belief programs he now teaches within his organization: BeliefWorks.

Why are our beliefs so powerful, and why is changing them so transforming? Whatever beliefs you have said YES to create the reality you are living today. Are you sometimes overwhelmed by stress, drama, or sadness? Do you have a belief that is holding you back from experiencing the joy and success you dream are possible? As you begin reading, set your intent to see how Ray's process of shifting limiting beliefs can help you in your own life or work. Pay close attention to these questions as you make your way through this book and I assure you, any undiscovered self-defeating beliefs you hold will be revealed to you.

It can be startling to come face-to-face with your most fearful beliefs, but it is also a gift—a rare opportunity to revitalize your health, wealth, and your most precious relationships. Take the actions suggested in the book, carefully follow the process, and something astonishing will happen; you'll change the way you see the world.

What is the Toltec Secret to Happiness? Like most secrets, it's not much of a secret at all. It's out there for all to see yet invisible to all except those who are ready hear it. The secret is simply this: *Limiting beliefs result in drama and sadness, and positive beliefs support a life filled with happiness*

and possibility. To eliminate self-judgment, unhappiness, conflict, and regret, you must discover the beliefs you have that are rooted in baseless fear and learn to change those beliefs. Ray Dodd will show you how.

Ray has shared with me how much he is inspired by the belief work itself because each time he teaches it he learns something new, and the lessons of our tradition deepen for him. My father taught us that the word *Toltec* means “artist.” Like all dedicated teachers Ray is a passionate artist, and now he shares his ever-evolving art with you in each of the pages in this book.

You will find an echo of my family’s teachings in these pages as well, as Ray continues to contribute to the oral tradition of the Toltec. The element that makes this book a standout is Ray Dodd himself—his own struggles and his humanity are fully present in the lessons and in the voice of this book. The key for any student—or reader—of any tradition is that he or she resonates with the message of the teacher. Make no mistake about it—Ray Dodd’s message comes from the voice of applied wisdom and love. *The Toltec Secret to Happiness: Create Lasting Change with the Power of Belief* is a beautiful work of art, and I am sure it will be a fundamental instrument in your path of transformation for many years to come.

With Love,

don Miguel Ruiz, Jr., author of
The Five Levels of Attachment

INTRODUCTION

Belief is Power, the power to create. You create your own reality simply by what you agree to believe. Your deepest beliefs about everything hold your attention and propel you into action, or keep you from taking action. What you believe impacts your performance at work, your attitudes about money, how you navigate through the world, and how you conduct all your relationships.

Belief colors every experience and determines how we react in any situation, yet we are often unaware of the hidden beliefs that guide us. Sometimes our beliefs hold us back from realizing our deepest desires. Oftentimes it is the long-forgotten agreements we've made with ourselves that keep us stuck, repeatedly making choices in conflict with what we say we value most.

When you come to understand the real power of belief, you'll discover you have the ability to create any point of view you choose. Learn to exercise that power and you can defeat fear-based beliefs about yourself and the world around you that keep you from the happiness and inner peace you've always desired. Harness the power of belief and you'll break through self-created boundaries you were convinced could never, ever change.

In my practice helping others change their limiting beliefs, I assist people who are motivated to face whatever is holding them back. They have already decided where they want to go; they're just not exactly sure how to get there. Traditional performance coaching focuses on what is true now, in the present moment, and what actions need to be taken to produce different results. However, mapping out strategies and taking action are only one small piece of the puzzle.

While facilitating transformation for both individuals and organizations, I have noticed that focusing on what people believe is far more powerful than trying to change behavior. Concentrating on what they believe has been vastly more effective than dissecting the stories they tell me about their problems and then working from the details. Working from the details creates managed solutions that don't last because the real problem has never been resolved. In order to effect lasting and positive change, they need to change what they believe.

The belief-change process contained in this book, born out of my own experiences and sharpened by working with hundreds of people to alter their own self-defeating beliefs, is deeply rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Toltec. In 1996 on a trip to the pyramid ruins in Teotihuacán, Mexico, I had the amazing good fortune to meet don Miguel Ruiz M.D., author of the best-selling book about the teachings of the Toltec, *The Four Agreements*. Don Miguel is a former medical doctor and teacher dedicated to carrying on his family's spiritual heritage.

Not long after the trip, I began to study with don Miguel. I went to see him on a regular basis over a period of six years and those visits began a new chapter in my life.

Prior to meeting don Miguel, I spent many years trying to find a way to heal my own unhappiness and dissatisfaction. I was always looking for something different or better. I was addicted to identifying what was wrong with everything, so I tried whatever I could think of—moving to a new place, finding a different job, starting a new relationship—all with the potential to get me what I thought I needed. I went through portions of this cycle many times, buying into the myth that I would finally be happy when I had this, or when I found that.

Having mixed results trying to change what was outside of me, I started on an inward journey that took me through many philosophies, faiths, and practices. I worked with various types of healers and read mountains of motivational and self-help books. I studied numerous spiritual traditions, had a martial arts practice in Aikido, and even spent time in a seminary.

Along the way I accumulated lots of wonderful knowledge I wholeheartedly agreed with, yet I was still struggling, frequently overpowered by unwanted emotional reactions when things didn't go the way I thought they should. At the time, I assumed simply collecting all that information would do the trick. Looking back now, I realize I wasn't living all those ideas that sounded so good to me because they were in conflict with what I really believed.

My own process of change went into high gear when I began to study with don Miguel. Nothing he taught was in

conflict with what I had learned up to that point. In fact, it complemented it. I discovered the Toltec way is unique, chock-full of simple yet brilliant devices that produce extraordinary results when put into practice. I have done my best to include as many as possible in this book.

The Toltec were an ancient culture chiefly located in what is now the pyramid ruins of Teotihuacán in the high midlands of Mexico. In a tradition that dates back thousands of years and continues today, the Toltec were known throughout Mexico as men and women of knowledge. One interpretation of the word “Toltec” is “artist.” They considered the manner in which you lived your life as your art; thus the Toltec way was not a religion but more accurately a way of life.

The modern Toltec view embodies many universally accepted truths adopted by bona fide faiths and spiritual traditions around the world, along with a common-sense approach to explaining what we are and how we got this way. Toltec philosophy claims that there is no way for us to change unless we have an understanding of how we create our own unique perception of the world. The Toltec description of human awareness is that the mind never rests, and one of its main purposes is to dream. Their mythology states that we are always dreaming, not only at night, but also while we are awake, and what we experience inside the dream is significantly altered by our beliefs about everything.

You are always modifying what you see, according to what you believe. What you believe produces a unique perception of the world and drives most of your thoughts,

your actions, your joys, and your sorrows. It is very real, yet amazingly enough, it is only real for you and no one else.

My understanding of the true power of belief began 30 years ago when I tried to quit smoking cigarettes. Although I only smoked a few cigarettes a day, I had come to despise the habit. About that time, the government began to force cigarette manufacturers to publicize the health hazards of smoking and print warnings on the package. Even the pack of cigarettes said smoking was bad for you!

I had all the information I needed to make a decision to quit smoking, but I just couldn't stop. I would quit for a few days, buy a pack, smoke a few cigarettes, and then throw the pack away disgusted with myself. I tried everything there was on the market to help me quit smoking. I bought nicotine gum, books, tapes, and took special supplements. I even tried hypnosis, but none of it helped. Sometimes I would quit for weeks. The physical addiction to the nicotine would subside, but something much more powerful was pulling me back into the habit. My level of frustration became enormous.

One night as I was drifting off to sleep I heard an unfamiliar voice from deep within me say, *You're afraid to embrace LIFE! You can't breathe deeply without the smoke to calm your fear. You live in the shadows. You don't care whether you live or die.*

I immediately dismissed the thought as preposterous. "Of course I care. I want to live!" I said to myself. But as the days passed I started to look carefully at this thought that had risen from a level well below what I was conscious of.

You don't care whether you live or die.

The words haunted me. When I stopped denying it, something emerged from me. I became aware of a hidden memory that now existed only as a long-forgotten dream. There was a part of me that believed exactly what I had discovered. It was true and yet it had been invisible to me. That awareness was startling and yet very powerful. Maybe I believed it, but with awareness I could make a choice to no longer agree with it. The part of me that believed it was from another time in my life. Once I understood that, I stopped smoking immediately. The battle was over. It was never about smoking. It was all about what I had believed.

Whether you are aware of it or not, the entire tapestry of your life—woven together with the threads of belief—is your masterpiece. We are all Toltecs, artists of life. So whether you are interested in changing self-defeating beliefs that stand in your way, increasing your people skills by recognizing what others truly believe, or using the positive beliefs that have served you well as a springboard to the next level of personal achievement, understanding the true power of belief can be a very valuable tool.

Step by step, you will discover how to remap any belief that is an obstacle to getting the results you want, unleashing the potential for profound and enduring transformation in every part of your life.

The Toltec Secret to Happiness is divided into three sections. Part 1, “The First Dream,” examines the ability we have to devise our own unique reality, or as the Toltec described it, our personal dream. It defines what belief really is, shows how our belief system was created, and describes how hidden beliefs can keep us from the happiness we

dream is possible. Part 2, “The Second Dream,” contains carefully designed steps for modifying any belief you want to change. Part 3, “Tools,” includes a list of definitions for terms used throughout the book. Some of the terms are taken directly from the Toltec mythology, some I have modified from the original concepts, and some are my own invention.

Over the years I have noticed that what I considered a simple idea could be a maddening puzzle for my clients and students. They needed to hear it over and over again in lots of different forms before they would start to comprehend what was being said. Looking back over my own process, I did the very same thing. My teachers would repeat many times over concepts that are obvious to me now but certainly weren't then. These devices, the terms in the book, are designed to help you clearly understand the core ideas that are fundamental to create lasting and positive change.

It is awareness of the awesome force of belief that creates possibility. Possibility limited only by what you can imagine. Positive belief anchored in respect, love, integrity, and self-acceptance provides you, the artist, with a new brush that makes bold strokes. It is time to create the life you've only dreamed of. But to do this you must be ready. Ready to change what you believe!

PART ONE

THE FIRST DREAM



We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.

—Anaïs Nin

CHAPTER 1

THE FABRIC OF BELIEF

A belief is a dream, a simulated reality shaped by your most pivotal experiences and what you have decided those experiences mean. A conviction that exists beyond language, belief projects its point of view onto all that you perceive, distorting what is.

If you want to change your life—Right Now—there is nothing more powerful than changing what you believe!

Belief creates your personal reality: a unique world view where often what is true is true only for you. What I am referring to are not political beliefs or beliefs about religion, but the unseen agreements you made long ago that impact every word you say, every thought you think, and every action you take. The voice of those agreements is the conversation you hear chattering in your mind—proclaiming how things are, describing what you know, telling you about everything you believe.

Your interpretation of life through your filter of beliefs alters what you perceive. Imagine you and I are looking at a dog. If you remember your high school biology, the light reflecting off the dog enters the retina in your eye and

through a series of biochemical reactions, receptors process what you see, sending an electrical impulse to the brain and creating an image in your mind. The image is raw data. What you actually take in is modified by how you interpret the data.

We project what we believe onto whatever we are experiencing. The process is similar to the way a movie projector works. Light passes through a moving film and the images on the film are projected onto a screen through a lens. If the lens isn't clean the images are distorted. In the same way, your beliefs coat the lens of your awareness; and when light reflects off what you see, your beliefs alter what you perceive inside your mind.

What you observe is not actual but virtual. If I love dogs and you are afraid of dogs, we are each going to have a different experience. What you see and feel and what I see and feel are not exactly the same even though we are looking at the same dog. In a similar way, if a college art class is drawing a human model, the students don't all draw the same thing in the same way. Granted, some of this is because not everyone has the same level of skill or technique, but more importantly, the artists are expressing what they see inside their own virtual reality.

Most of the time we don't have any direct contact with what we observe at all. Unless we are tasting something, or feeling the texture and temperature by touching it, our perception is derived largely from the image in our mind and the sounds we hear.

No one has a pure perception of the world they encounter moment to moment because we alter the information

received by the senses based on past experiences and our agreements about those experiences. An example: If I invite you to dinner at my mother's house and she serves us my favorite dish, what you taste will likely be different from what I taste. Similarly, if you invite me to a concert where they are performing music you're familiar with, but I've never heard before, my experience is not going to be the same as yours.

To make matters worse, we distort the already altered version of reality presented to us by other people. To illustrate, let's say you are my friend. You know me and we have talked many times. You go to a party and get into a conversation with a man you've never met before. You tell the man about me but you don't give him my name. My sister goes to the same party and talks to the same man about me but also does not mention my name. By chance the next day my mother runs into the very same man in the supermarket and while they are waiting in the checkout line, she starts to tell him about me, her son. It is likely this man will think he was told about three different people because what he heard was how I existed in each of their minds. What he experienced was their perception of me through the lens of their judgments, opinions, and beliefs.

The typical understanding of belief is that it is a product of the mind, produced by our reason. Something is true because we think it is true. We are under the impression that what we think we believe is actually what we believe. However, what we *think* we believe is often just an opinion. Opinions are not beliefs but the application of all the accumulated knowledge we have agreed to and our relentless

defense of those agreements. Belief is so much more than what we think is true. The origin of belief is not words but experience, the emotion that arises from that experience, and the evolution of what we perceive that experience to mean.

Is it possible to develop a belief without language, without thinking about it? Of course it is! A toddler that has been scratched by a cat develops an instant belief about cats (watch out!) without understanding words.

From the Toltec perspective, everything we believe about ourselves, and everything we have decided we know about our world is filled with illusions fabricated by the dreaming mind.

So, consider a broader definition for the word “belief.”

A belief is a dream, a simulated reality shaped by your most pivotal experiences and what you have decided those experiences mean. A conviction that exists beyond language, belief projects its point of view onto all that you perceive, distorting what is.

What you believe is what you have no doubt about. Let's say you need to run an errand and you decide to drive your car to get there. You leave your house, walk out to the car, open the car with your keys, get in, put the key in the ignition, start the car, and begin to drive away. For most people, this whole sequence is pretty routine. You don't think much about it. You aren't considering how a key works in a lock or how the motor of a car operates after you turn the key. You don't consider it because you've done it many times, and you don't have any doubt about what will happen. It's not conscious, it's automatic. You believe it

works. You believe it works because that is where you have invested your faith.

Where your faith is invested is powerful and very difficult to change just by changing your thinking. As an example, according to psychologists the greatest fear people have is not of dying but of speaking in front of other people. Many people have stage fright and so one way to overcome this fear is to take a public speaking course. A course like that can be helpful, but what it really does is help manage fear. When they step out onto the stage, even after they've finished the course, there is often still something trying to overpower all the affirmations, techniques, and good intentions. That something is what they believe about themselves.

Many times our most deeply held beliefs are invisible to us. We think we know what we believe, but maybe we really don't. Ask yourself: What do I believe about money? What do I believe about my work? What do I really believe about God, love, family, or the immense world around me? You can probably come up with some pretty good answers, but are they true? Suppose you tell everyone that you believe in being kind, considerate, and loving. What happens when someone doesn't act kind, considerate, and loving towards you? How do you feel when someone doesn't act kind or considerate towards someone you care about? When you are driving your car and another driver does something you don't like, is your reaction in conflict with what you told everyone you believed?

Belief can be so powerful that it controls your entire body. Just look in the mirror when you are upset or stressed.

Look at your face and how you are standing—your posture. Notice whether your breathing is deep or shallow. Belief affects our biological systems too. There is much written about how fear, stress, and negative thinking can cause dis-ease in the human body. There is also mountains of evidence about how love, positive thought, laughter, and touch aid in the healing of the same diseases.

Because belief lives below the level of ordinary awareness, you don't notice the agreements you made long ago. What you notice is the emotional point of view of the belief. When you are triggered by a stressful situation, what you're really aware of is being overwhelmed by an emotion. Even if you have learned to hold back your words, your reaction is far more powerful than any thought you might have about how you should or shouldn't act. It's a runaway train and you're not in control. In those moments, forcing yourself to behave in a way you think is acceptable can be like trying to strap down the lid on the pot so the water doesn't boil over while the flame underneath is turned all the way up.

Real transformation of the belief system cannot be accomplished simply by deciding to believe something else, reciting affirmations, or collecting more information. Have you ever been to a seminar, come back all fired up with lots of good information and the best intentions. only to find months later that not much has really changed? You learn to talk the talk, but you can't seem to walk the walk. The change doesn't last because what really drives behavior is belief. Real transformation of your beliefs comes from engaging the totality of what you are, not just your mind.

You are so much more than intellect and reason. You are vastly more than your thinking. You are this human body with the senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste, and smell. You are instinct and intuition. You are a feeling being with emotions. You are spirit imbued with the force of LIFE—aware—and through your perception, *a dreamer*.

For years, I had a very hard time understanding the Toltec perspective that we are always dreaming. I thought it meant nothing was real. That's not exactly true. What it means is that we don't accurately experience what is in front of us, but perceive instead a virtual image altered by the activity of the dreaming mind. How we interpret what we experience is dramatically influenced by the structure of our beliefs.

Our personal dream, our individual simulated reality, is the solid and familiar story we exist in. It becomes so familiar that we no longer notice it. Only when something drastic happens to suspend it—like an accident, illness, sudden loss, or other tragedy—do we get a glimpse of the world without our usual filters. In those moments, the mirage evaporates and we begin to see the limitless possibilities available by changing what we believe.

Years ago, after a trip into the interior of Mexico, I came down with malaria. I was very sick with a high fever. Six weeks later, I finally started to get better, but I was still weak and had lost a lot of weight.

Some friends of mine took me out for a walk in a local mountain park. They thought it would do me good to get outside into the fresh spring air. We walked for a short way and then I decided we should turn back because

I was getting tired. Just as we turned around to go back, we passed a man and a woman walking the other way. The man called my name. He said, “Ray?” I turned around and looked at him. He seemed pleasant but I didn’t recognize him. I began to walk away. “Ray?” he said again. I looked harder. I had a warm feeling looking at him. His face was bathed in the late afternoon light and seemed soft, like the effect you get when you spread gel on a camera lens. Still, I couldn’t recall his face and so I started to walk down the hill. He called out loudly, “Ray!” I looked back at him and struggled to place him. I stared directly at him for what seemed to me to be a very long time. All of a sudden, I heard a popping sound as if something that had been stuck released, and there was a return to a more familiar feeling.

I could now see this was Steve, a man I’d known for several years. Steve worked at the same company I did. I liked him and thought he was immensely intelligent, but we would often disagree because I thought he had a habit of rushing into things with way more enthusiasm than planning. Like just about everyone else in my life I had a judgment about him. My long illness, however, had severely diminished my attachment to just about everything—my possessions, my personal history, and my judgments. Much of what I had deemed serious and important was no longer even worth considering. I just didn’t have the energy to maintain being right. Part of my world before I became sick was Steve; the way I judged him, defined him, and even gossiped about him. Because the illness had largely dissolved that, I saw him in a very different way. So different in fact I could not even recognize him!