

Scaling – Beliefs About Yourself

We all hold positive or negative beliefs about ourselves, other people, and the world. Our beliefs are important because they significantly impact on what we think, feel, and do, and how we make sense of our experiences.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) observes that negative beliefs can cause problems because they often lead us to view things in an extreme, all-or-nothing way: we see ourselves as totally good or totally bad, the best or worst, a complete success or a complete failure. People are rarely that simple. Most of us lie somewhere in between these extremes.

If you hold a negative belief about yourself, it can be helpful to examine it using a rating scale. Rating scales are useful because they show us that things are usually not as negative or 'bad' as they seem, but instead fall closer to the middle. This can help you develop more realistic and flexible beliefs about yourself.



How could this tool help me?

This *Scaling – Beliefs About Yourself* exercise can help you:

- Identify a negative belief you hold about yourself.
- Explore whether this belief is accurate.
- Develop and strengthen a new belief that is more accurate and helpful.
- Judge yourself more fairly and flexibly.



How should I use it?

It's best to complete this exercise with the help of your therapist first. Once you're familiar with it, you can practice using it on your own. Each section will ask you to think about a different aspect of your experience:

- **Negative belief.** Write down a negative belief you hold about yourself. Most beliefs begin with the statement, "I am...".
- **Preferred belief.** Write down an alternative belief you would prefer to hold about yourself. It could be a new belief, or the opposite of your negative belief.
- **Put your preferred belief on a scale.** Write your preferred belief at both ends of the 0% to 100% scale.
- **Examine your belief.** Using the scale and space below it, explore the following questions.
 - **Initial rating.** What rating would you give yourself on the scale right now? Mark it with an X so you can come back to your first rating later.
 - **Rate other people,** such as people you know, celebrities, or historical figures. Make sure you include people who deserve the lowest score on the scale (ideally lower than yours). How accurate does your first rating seem after adding these examples?
 - **Change your perspective.** Rate yourself on the scale from different points of view. How would someone who cares about you rate you? Do you see yourself differently after viewing yourself from a different perspective?
 - **Define your scale.** Create a list of criteria you would use for the lowest (0%) and highest (100%) possible scores and write these at each end of the line. If someone scored 0% on this scale, what would their life look like? Next, rate yourself against each of these criteria. Does this change your belief at all?
- **New rating.** Give yourself another overall rating on the scale and mark it with an X. Has your belief changed after completing this exercise?

The worksheet is titled "Scaling – Beliefs About Yourself". It has two columns for "Negative belief" and "Preferred belief". Below these is a scale from 0% to 100%. The "Examine your belief" section contains four sub-sections: "Initial rating" (mark the scale with an X), "Rate other people" (rate others on the scale), "Change your perspective" (rate yourself from different viewpoints), and "Define your scale clearly" (list criteria for 0% and 100% scores).



Helpful tips

- Record plenty of notes below the scale to refer back to. If you want, you can draw and make ratings on a new scale for each question.
- Answering each question using a different color can help you organize the information.

Scaling – Beliefs About Yourself

Negative belief

What is the negative belief you have about yourself?

I am... _____

Preferred belief

What would you prefer to believe about yourself?

I am... _____

Put your preferred belief on a 0–100% scale by writing it in the boxes below

0%

100%

A large grid for writing a belief on a scale from 0% to 100%. The grid is 20 columns wide and 15 rows high. Above the grid, there are two boxes labeled '0%' and '100%' with an arrow pointing from left to right across the top of the grid.

Examine your belief

On the scale above, record your responses to the following questions.

Initial rating

On the scale above, what rating would you give yourself right now? Mark the scale with an X

Rate other people

- Can you think of people who would get a higher rating than you?
- Can you think of people who deserve a lower rating than you?
- Rate other people you know at different points on the scale.
- How accurate does your initial rating seem now? What would be a fairer rating?



Change your perspective

- What evidence is your initial rating based on? What evidence contradicts that first rating?
- Use this information to rate yourself on your best / worst / average days.
- Think about someone who cares about you – where would they rate you on the scale? (Why?)
- Do you see yourself any differently now?



Define your scale clearly

- Start by defining the top end of your scale: if someone scored 100%, what would their life look like?
- For each of these criteria, what would the opposite (0%) look like?
- Rate yourself on each of these new criteria.
- How do these criteria affect how you think about yourself?



New rating

What rating would you give yourself on the scale right now? Mark the scale with an X

Scaling – Beliefs About Yourself

Negative belief

What is the negative belief you have about yourself?

I am... Unlikable

Preferred belief

What would you prefer to believe about yourself?

I am... Likable

Put your preferred belief on a 0–100% scale by writing it in the boxes below

0% Likable

100% Likable

X - Initial rating

X - Simon who
bullied me at
school

X - The kids who hang
out on the street near
my home

X - Jean at work

X - David from
my club

X - my mom

X - my best friend
Susan

X - me at my worst

X - me at my best

X - my average

X - my mom would rate
me here

Someone who scores 0%:

- Has never had a friend
- Never gets invited out

X - I have some friends

X - I get invited out most weekends

Someone who scores 100%:

- makes friends with everyone they meet
- Gets invited out to lots of things

X - New rating

Examine your belief

On the scale above, record your responses to the following questions.

Initial rating

On the scale above, what rating would you give yourself right now? Mark the scale with an X.

Rate other people

- Can you think of people who would get a higher rating than you?
- Can you think of people who deserve a lower rating than you?
- Rate other people you know at different points on the scale.
- How accurate does your initial rating seem now? What would be a fairer rating?



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- How do these criteria affect how you think about yourself?



New rating

What rating would you give yourself on the scale right now? Mark the scale with an X.