

## Module 5: Align Your Efficacy Beliefs With Your Goals

All right, welcome to module five, align your efficacy beliefs with your goals. By now, I hope you've changed the way in which you engage with your work. We are ready this week to shift our focus to self-efficacy. In other words, what this module is all about is your belief in your ability to do your work.

So, assuming you have some specific work-related goals you need to align your belief with, what it is you are setting out to create so you can create the results you want? This week, we will tackle six different objectives, and you'll see how they all come together.

We said that self-efficacy is about your beliefs in your ability. What can negatively affect the way you perceive yourself is attribution, or how you understand the cause-and-effect nature of your successes and failures. So, today we will cover the three attribution errors that lead to a negative spiral.

Next, your beliefs affect your expectations, so we're going to talk about how to set realistic expectations rather than set yourself up for failure. Your expectations are related to what we call the Pygmalion effect. So, by using this, I'll teach you how to increase your work performance.

Once you have your mind on straight, it's important to set up goals and in particular, stretch goals. Goals that challenge you to grow but don't overwhelm you. Then it will really be about just pouring in effort and staying persistent. But it's not enough to get aligned, it's important to stay on track. And sometimes, our mind can get in the way with all its negative thoughts and fears. So, what you can do instead of, or in case of mistakes or failures, we're going to talk about how to trade in negative self-talk and self-criticism for self-compassion, super important.

And lastly, we're going to talk about how to cultivate a growth mindset which will serve you well, both when facing success and failure. Both of which are inevitable. So, lost to cover today but all really important and relevant information to set you up for long-term success.

Let's start at the top attributions. So, with regard to attributions, let's take a look at three attribution errors that can lead to a negative spiral, and how to turn those around.

The first attribution error is what we call an internal attribution, which is when you attribute failures or successes to yourself when there are other factors in the mix. Well, at times, you might contribute to a task's failure, its failure alone does not necessarily mean that you are at fault. Often, there are external factors that contribute to a lack of success. So, think back to a failure you experienced that was really tough on you, where you were really hard on yourself. On further reflection, could there have been factors outside of your control that contributed to that failure? What would happen if you focus on those as well? You'd be less likely to feel negatively.

Now, let's take a look at the opposite scenario. You might attribute all the blame to external factors and not take any responsibility for mistakes you have made. This is an attempt to conserve your self-efficacy, because when faced with failure, if you attribute the failure to yourself, you will become anxious. Do you find yourself taking the victim role and not attributing any of the reasons for your failure to your contribution? If so, don't be so hard on

yourself. Just recognize that you're likely doing it because you have an intense fear of failure. Perhaps, a fear of feeling like an imposter or some other fear-based thought. What's important is to consider both internal and external factors in a balanced and realistic way.

A second attribution error relates to stability, because spirals often occur after three or more consecutive, consecutively stable wins or losses. You're less likely to attribute the win or loss to a stable factor such as your ability when you failed multiple times in a row, and you associate that failure with your inability. This can lead to discouragement, and here's why you're not saying it's about something you did, but it's about the person you are. You are an incapable person is what you're saying, and it is this thinking that can lead to a negative spiral. Conversely, when you attribute the win or loss to instability with statements like "I didn't invest adequate effort in this the loss.", is less likely to decrease your self-efficacy. Adopt Thomas Edison's approach after experiencing more failures than most people you'll likely ever meet. Edison said, "I have not failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

Lastly, when you attribute success or failure to a controllability factor, you are making a third type of attribution error. When you see yourself as having control over the process, you are more likely to self-correct, even when you have no control over some aspects of the process, search for aspects over what you have control and focus on those. For instance, when you experience anxiety. If you focus on regulating your breathing, you can change your state even in the face of an event that feels scary, and is out of your control, is when you believe you have no control that you end up feeling frustrated, anxious, or helpless, and continue on a downward spiral. When you attribute your success or failure to factors that are internal, stable, and over which you lack control, you are more certain to remain in a spiral. Consider what external unstable and controllable factors may have contributed to your performance and take these into account to get the full story of what's transpired.

Now that we've covered ways to increase your self-efficacy, it's important to set realistic expectations so you don't set yourself up for failure. I'll share with you a true story about why expectations are so important to your success. In the 1960s, a researcher from Harvard assessed elementary school students and told their teachers which of them will make a huge leap forward. As it turns out, the researcher did not look at the actual scores. But randomly told the teachers the results and ask them not to tell the students. He came back at the end of that year and found that the students who performed better were the ones the teachers thought were smarter. Their IQ actually changed during this year. In other words, the teacher's belief in these students was delivered in those teachers' non-verbals. The study was then replicated in the workplace. This time, identifying workers with the most potential. Similarly at the end of that year, what the researcher found was that absenteeism went down when the boss communicated a stronger belief in certain workers.

Well, we can learn from these experiments is that the power of the mind influences reality, our expectations become reality. But how might the way you look at life affect your expectations or even self-efficacy? You might ask Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology, looked at the difference between optimists and pessimists with regards to goals and expectations. And here's what he found, pessimists were realistic in terms of both short-term and long-term goals.

But because of their pessimism, they had low expectations, had low motivation. And when they were successful, they interpreted their success as luck. Optimists, on the other hand, were unrealistic in the short-term thinking. They can achieve much more than they could in the time that they had, but realistic and long-term goals. They had strong self-efficacy beliefs, and high levels of motivation, and even if they didn't succeed as expected, they kept that up. And when that happened, their attribution or interpretation was more objective as in “I failed but what can I learn from this?”. Like we said, it took Edison 10,000 times to get to the light bulb. So, these optimists raised their performance to match their elevated beliefs, they got out of their comfort zone.

Now, if you're a pessimist, it's likely because you're afraid of failing. So, you keep yourself safe. Growing up, my dad always told me, “If you have low expectations, you won't be disappointed.”, and I think, that advice can serve me well when it comes to expectations of other people because that is something that's outside of my control. But when it comes to myself, I have high expectations. I'm highly motivated, and this is in line with what Seligman found. Optimists are more resilient, more motivated, work harder, or more successful, and eight times less likely to be depressed. I guess you can say I'm an optimist, but here's the secret. Neither optimism nor pessimism is how you were born. You can change your mindset. In fact, Seligman was a pessimist all his life until he realized it wasn't serving him. Then he created an entire movement focused on a more positive mindset, positive psychology. If he can turn his mindset around, so can you.

In the book “Good to Great”, author Jim Collins shares the paradoxical story of Jim Stockdale, a United States military officer who, although he was held captive for eight years during the Vietnam war, never lost faith that he would prevail. Stockdale made it out alive, but not all of his prison-mates did. What is paradoxical? Is that according to Stockdale, those who felt most optimistic were the ones who did not make it out alive. The optimist in Stockdale's group kept imagining they would get out by a specific date. And when time, and time again, that did not come to pass, they reportedly died of a broken heart. The lesson from the Stockdale Paradox is that to be truly resilient, you have to face your challenges, not wish them away. You must remain realistic and focus on aspects of the challenge over which you have control. In Stockdale's case, he focused on lifting the morale of his fellow prisoners which gave him the resilience he needed to persevere.

The question this leaves us with is how to optimize optimism? That is how to have a healthy level of belief. Through the Stockdale Paradox, we see that it is not enough to believe, you have to apply yourself, you have to do the work, in essence. The secret to success is a combination of optimism, your belief or self-efficacy, in this case, passion, which is loving your work, and hard work, the willingness to roll up your sleeves and put in effort to produce the results you want to attain.

One of my coaching clients had unrealistic expectations coupled with black and white thinking. She tended to expect herself to save the world, be perfect, and do the right thing all the time. And when she didn't live up to her expectations, she'd feel ashamed and beat herself up. When we talk

about having realistic expectations, it means letting go of perfectionism. Instead, go for good enough.

We've now covered the importance of your belief, as well as having realistic expectations. This leads me to our next objective, the Pygmalion effect. The Pygmalion effect is when your expectations become your reality. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Remember the story about the elementary school children, their teachers believe in them, affected how their teacher interacted with them that affected the students' belief in themselves, which led to higher performance.

Usually, when we talk about a self-fulfilling prophecy, we only focus on our own limiting beliefs that lead to self-sabotage. But here, we're talking about outside influences when others believe in us. They make us believe more in ourselves. And that's exactly what happened with those school-aged kids. The opposite, though, is also true. When we lack a belief in ourselves, whether because we are pessimistic or because others around us don't believe in us, our performance can suffer.

So, how can you utilize the Pygmalion effect to your benefit? Remember that what's important is your mindset and your effort, whether you succeed or fail at a task is irrelevant, so long as you are learning, you're winning. Avoid labeling yourself as a winner or a loser, the outcome doesn't represent who you are. Only your efforts do. The key is to have goals, stay focused on them and be relentless until you get the results you want. Don't let your mind get in the way.

Now we've all heard about the importance of having goals, we typically focus on goals that start at the start of a new year, as in our New Year's resolution we focus on it when we want to lose weight or get a job, but in our careers and life, it's important to have goals always, something to strive toward. To be successful, you need to take proactive action toward your goal. We do our best work when we get into a state of flow, where we focus without distraction on our goals. But in order to do so, you need to set clear goals that are suitable to your skill level. Goals need to be clear, specific, and measurable, and it's best to have goals that give you immediate feedback so you can learn as you go about whether your attempts are getting you closer or further away from the outcome you desire.

You might wonder why is this so important. Once you've lost the weight and got the job, why keep creating new goals? Well, the point of having goals is not just to attain the results at the end but to have something meaningful to focus on. And there are different kinds of goals. Today we will talk about stretch goals. Stretch goals help you grow. You're stretching yourself to achieve goals outside of your comfort level, but not one so audacious that they create panic. Anytime you go outside your comfort zone, it takes courage. As an example, if you had a goal of making more money, a simple goal might be to make an extra thousand dollars. Well, a stretch goal might be to double your income. Can you feel how this stretches you?

Now the key is not focusing on the how but rather on the what and the why. What do you want and why do you want it? The how will reveal itself to you over time. The other important thing to keep in mind is how to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Overwhelm happens when we focus on too many things at once or when the things we focus on seem too big. If you already feel so in

your work, identify what about the task you are doing is most challenging. If it is the size of the task, break it down into manageable chunks. If it's the time frame in which you have to complete it, estimate how long you will need and ask for an extension or ask to delegate out aspects of the task. If the work itself is beyond your scope, get mentoring or ask to exchange the task for a more fitting one given your expertise. Create a plan about how you will attain feedback about the task and eliminate distractions for a set period so you can be singularly focused and get into that state of flow. Do you berate yourself for your lack of efficiency, or your lack of efficiency rather? Maybe you indulge in negative self-talk because you believe that you're a slacker or you're not capable. Often, people who do this to themselves believe they will be more efficient if they are cracking the whip.

Coming back to how optimists and pessimists interpret things differently, think about these two things: First, when you experience a failure, do you tell yourself it's permanent and that you'll never be able to figure it out, or that it's temporary? Which interpretation do you think will help you stay motivated and keep going? And second, when you strike out, do you tell yourself it's always going to be like this, or do you use the expression "this too shall pass"? Which one do you think will help you keep on keepin' on?

So think about this: when you don't like the movie you're watching, do you knock down the wall the movie is projected on, or do you change the movie? You change the movie, right? So how can you apply this to your goals?

Now we covered how to change your thinking, but what about your feelings? Maybe you're upset because something didn't work out the way you hoped. What can you do? Well, there's only one constructive thing to do, and that is to accept it. You only make it worse by insisting that you shouldn't feel this way. So now if you're someone who's harsh with yourself, I have an exercise for you. Write out a dialogue with an imaginary hostile stranger who puts you down for feeling anxious. This stranger is a projection of your own self-criticisms. When you talk back to them, you develop greater self-acceptance and your anxiety will diminish or disappear.

Do you blame yourself whenever something goes wrong, even if it wasn't your fault? Do you berate yourself for days after a perceived mistake was made? Critically analyzing situations and your behaviors is important, but being so hard on yourself can be debilitating. Try to build yourself up rather than beating yourself up. Remind yourself that everyone makes mistakes. As much as you're thinking about your mistake long after it has happened, everyone else has likely forgotten about it. Have some self-compassion. And if you're not sure how, I'll share with you some resources at the end of this module, so hang tight.

Now we've talked a lot about mindset today. We talked about your beliefs and your ability, the difference in mindsets between optimists and pessimists. So what is a growth mindset and how can you apply it when it comes to your goals? Psychologist Carol Dweck made popular the notion of a growth versus a fixed mindset. According to her, when faced with an obstacle, people with a growth mindset can counterbalance negative events by focusing on their positive aspects. If your company suddenly announces major layoffs and you lose your job, if you hold a growth mindset, you will likely stay optimistic and focus on finding a new job. If, however, you have a

fixed mindset, you might attribute the loss to a personal attribute and consequently feel too depressed and unmotivated to pursue another position.

In fact, Dweck stated that those with a fixed mindset are more likely to avoid challenges, give up easily when faced with obstacles, see effort as fruitless, ignore useful negative feedback, feel threatened by the success of others, and as a result, they plateau early and achieve less than their full potential. It all comes back to their belief that intelligence is static, which leads to a desire to look smart.

On the flip side, those with a growth mindset embrace challenges, persist in the face of obstacles, see effort as a path to mastery, learn from criticism, find lessons and inspiration in the success of others, and ultimately reach ever higher levels of achievement. They believe intelligence can be developed, which leads to a desire to learn rather than just looking smart.

So, this week we tackled the three attribution errors you need to avoid. We stressed the importance of having realistic expectations and creating a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. We discussed the importance of creating stretch goals, turning negative self-talk into more compassionate talk, and developing a growth mindset. All of this is doable, so don't feel like it's beyond your reach. If you've been pessimistic your whole life, you can absolutely change.

Given all this, what is your biggest takeaway, and what do you commit to doing this week? Think about that. What's coming up that you might need to rearrange or work around?

To recap all the things that you've been doing: every week, we've been adding one more task to your list, and I'm hoping that you've been able to stick with this and create these little micro habits that can really make a big difference in your life. So hopefully, you're still organizing your space, reviewing your day at the end and jotting down some notes, practicing gratitude, eliminating those energy drains as they occur, focusing on what you have control over, and prioritizing those important things, particularly yourself.

This week, I want you to really focus on cultivating self-compassion. And so, what I have for you is a video and a self-compassion assessment that you will find in the notes of this module. So take some time to watch this video. The researcher Christine Neff has done a really excellent job of breaking down this really abstract concept of self-compassion by giving you some concrete things to think about. And then when you take that self-assessment, it will tell you how you've scored on these three factors. And when you look at those, she's really looking at each of those three factors from both sides of the same coin. And so, you actually end up getting six scores. So, it's the negative and the positive side of each of those factors, as well as a total score.

What I always tell my clients when they take this assessment is not to get too caught up in what your scores are. So, if you've scored low on it, it's not a point where you need to now beat yourself up or feel badly. What it really is is an accurate assessment of where you are currently with regards to your self-compassion. And so again, if you adopt that growth mindset, you can think about this as an opportunity now to work on the way that you talk to yourself, the way that you think about things, and how you manage your emotions. And when you are able to do that over time, you can come back and retake this assessment and see if you've scored higher. So, you

just make this a personal goal of yours and continually come back to reassess how things are progressing for you.

I hope that this was helpful in giving you some things to think about, and I'll see you again next week. Take care.