



## Chapter 3

# Believe In Yourself

*The story of the human race is the story of men and women selling themselves short.*

Dr. Abraham Maslow – Psychologist

*Pay attention to what you are thinking, and then decide if those thoughts are creating the kind of life you want. If they are not, then change your thoughts.*

Jill Bolte Taylor – Brain Scientist

*Never let a present lack of belief become a permanent way of belief.*

Donna Satchell

In the world of our goals and dreams, there are several roles we can play that produce little to no results for us. When we are in them, instead of making progress, we are:

1. **Waiters** – putting our plans on hold until the ideal time to move forward – such as when the kids leave home or when we have lots of money in the bank.

2. **Wishers** – always daydreaming about what we want; believing we could have it now while disliking the prospect of doing all that is necessary.
3. **Watchers** – looking at others and cheering them on as they go after their goals.
4. **Worriers** – agonizing over what will happen if we move forward and things do not work out.
5. **Wonderers** – always thinking about how to get started but not spending time to find out or to take any action.
6. **Whiners** – constantly complaining about what is not working.
7. **Wounded** – hurting because we pursued our dreams in the past and things did not work out as planned.

Most of us have played some, if not all, of these roles; I know I have. Unknowingly, we can occupy several at one time. We are *wishers*, wanting to be successful, while *wondering* how to get started. We are *wounded* by past disappointments or mistakes so we become *watchers*, rooting others on as they pursue their dreams. We become *waiters*, delaying moving forward, while *worrying* about things not working out if we do. We are *whiners* who are always complaining while *wishing* we had the time and energy to make our lives better.

What do these roles have in common? When we play them, we are stuck thinking instead of acting. I always say, “Success is an inside job with outside results.” So getting unstuck or doing more begins within. It starts with that age-old question: “Do you believe in yourself?” But wait a second ... is that the right question?

Over the years, I have been on a quest to understand success. I have read countless books, attended seminars, watched

interviews of successful individuals, listened to people talk about their aspirations, and even examined my own thinking. In doing all of this, many thoughts came to my mind, the most prevalent being, “Is the question ‘do you believe in yourself’ the correct one?” I say, “No, it is not.”

We need to go beyond such a simple question requiring just a yes or no answer. We human beings are much more complicated. Therefore, we need to dig deeper by asking a better question involving more thinking – “What is your *level* of belief?”

In life, we frequently encounter ranges or scales. Whether school grades, credit scores, or movie reviews, there are levels from low to high, ratings from F (fail) to A (excellent), and ranking systems with words indicating where we stand. The same can be true of belief. I have determined there are five levels:

1. Unbelief
2. Borderline Belief
3. Fluctuating Belief
4. Solid Belief
5. Bold Belief

How we move beyond being waiters, watchers, wishers, and the rest is by understanding our present level of belief and taking action to go to a higher one.

## UNBELIEF

Since Unbelief is such a critical stage, I have devoted an entire chapter to examining it. I will cover levels two to five in the next chapter.

At the Unbelief level, people feel they are unable to do something or they are trying to achieve a goal and are having serious

doubts they can reach it. For example, employees thinking they cannot manage special projects their supervisors gave them. Perhaps a couple, with four kids, is saving to buy a house but do not believe they will ever have enough money for the down payment. Or aspiring entrepreneurs start businesses during good economic times and, when times become uncertain, they no longer feel they can be successful.

*Fearful unbelief is  
unbelief in yourself.*

Thomas Carlyle  
Essayist, Historian

I believe many of us can relate to being at the stage of Unbelief. Think back to a time in school when you were faced with an extremely difficult subject. Maybe it was geometry, trigonometry, or calculus. Perhaps it was learning a foreign language, preparing a 20-page term paper, or dissecting a frog in biology class. For me, it was the first time I saw an algebra problem in a textbook. I almost freaked out. Seeing letters and numbers together in one math problem, I immediately thought, "That looks so hard. I will never be able to do that!"

So how do we move beyond the level of Unbelief? Here are eleven ways:

### **1. Believe in the belief that others have in you.**

My first experience with Unbelief was when I was about eight years old and I had a stuttering problem. I was embarrassed to complete a simple sentence. I would stumble over the words, have an incredibly difficult time pronouncing them, or would have to repeat the beginning of words over and over again. When teachers called on me to read a paragraph in class, it was a painful experience for both me and my classmates listening to me. I thought I was going to speak like that my entire life. I did not believe I would ever be able to talk like the other kids around me. Fortunately, at some

point in elementary school, I was assigned to a speech therapist. Dr. Smith told me she strongly believed I could get better.

Dr. Smith would work with me using various techniques. She recorded my speaking with all my stuttering and then had me listen to it repeatedly. I clearly recall thinking, “How ridiculous! This will never work. I can only get worse by listening to myself over and over again.” However, Dr. Smith felt differently and convinced me that it would help me improve.

I started to trust her and diligently complete the exercises she gave me. Slowly, I began to get better. Eventually, I could say an entire sentence and then several sentences without stuttering. In time, I could read a whole paragraph when called upon during class. I would read slower than the other kids, but I could finish the section without so many hesitations and stammers. Today, as I speak without stuttering, it is because of Dr. Smith’s belief that I could do it.

Ronald McNair had a similar person in his life. McNair graduated as valedictorian from Carver High School in Lake City, South Carolina and received a scholarship to North Carolina A & T University. He was excited about majoring in physics and pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a scientist. But shortly after enrolling in the program, he had second thoughts. Many of his classmates were from schools in big cities (like New York and Chicago) and they had taken high level classes that his school did not offer. A few weeks into the semester, McNair felt hopelessly behind everyone and he lost the confidence he had as the top student at his high school. Eventually he dropped out of physics, changing his major to music. Being an excellent saxophone player, that choice seemed logical. However, his college counselor, Mrs. Ruth Gore, did not think so.

*My doctors told me I  
would never walk again.  
My mother told me I  
would. I believed my  
mother.*

Wilma Rudolph  
Olympic Athlete

Mrs. Gore met with McNair and questioned his decision. He explained feeling ill-prepared for the course work, saying “I don’t know why I ever thought I could major in physics. I’m so far behind, I’ll never catch up.” Mrs. Gore suggested he take an aptitude test and let the results dictate his decision and McNair agreed. After scoring the exam, Mrs. Gore gave him a glimmer of hope when she said “Ronald, I think you should try physics again because I believe you are good enough.”

*Sometimes we have to  
rely on someone else’s  
belief (in us) until our  
own belief kicks in.*

Ruben Gonzalez  
Three-time Olympian

McNair re-enrolled in physics and graduated magna cum laude. He went on to receive a Ph.D. in laser physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and became the scientist he dreamed of as a child. Then McNair received the opportunity of a lifetime when he was one of 35 individuals selected, from over 10,000 applicants, to participate in NASA’s space shuttle program. He became the second African-American astronaut to travel into space when he flew on the STS 41-B. That achievement and his many other incredible accomplishments were made possible because McNair believed in Mrs. Gore’s belief in him. All his many successes are chronicled by his brother, Carl McNair, in his book, *In the Spirit of Ronald E. McNair, Astronaut, An American Hero*.

So the next time friends, managers or others mention how good you are at something, don’t just shrug it off as an unimportant comment. Even if you have doubts about your abilities, take time to seriously consider what they noticed. Understand the potential they see in you could take you far in life, if you recognize it, believe in yourself, and then pursue their insights with solid determination. That is exactly how Ronald McNair accomplished his dreams.

*Others can see in you  
what you cannot see in  
yourself.*

Donna Satchell