

The FAST Pathways® Academy – Leaving Behind

Our brains are hard-wired for efficiency, and beliefs make us much more efficient. They provide shortcuts, so you don't have to figure out every situation from scratch. But they also powerfully affect your perceptions of what's possible, and the choices you make.



For a long time everyone believed it was impossible to run a four minute mile, and that the attempt could generate actual physical harm. When Roger Banister finally dispelled the myth, his new record lasted for only 46 days – within a year it had been broken 7 times.

Once we have a belief, we rarely re-visit it to check if it's still valid. In one of my manufacturing change projects, the front-line staff wouldn't make decisions, saying that people got shouted at if they got things wrong. New to the organisation, I asked when that had last happened.

After much discussion, they agreed it was about eight years ago. They'd had two changes of management since then, and three quarters of the people had joined the organisation after the shouty manager left. But that 'fact' was still shaping everyone's behaviour. Brought out for scrutiny, they realised it wasn't true any more, but they'd never questioned it until I asked.

Have you got a belief which needs updating?

Because as well as not updating our beliefs, we actively ignore anything which contradicts them, sometimes being quite creative about why a particular contradiction doesn't count. So if you believe that you're not a confident person, you might brush off the time when you spoke up for yourself, saying 'that was different because...'. If you believe that life is inherently stressful, you might persevere in a situation which isn't good for you without even considering alternatives, believing that nothing else would be any better, so why look.

So if you've got a belief that's been holding you back. Maybe a teacher's less than promising assessment of your potential all those years ago, or even one of unknown origins, what would be different without it? It's time to find out.