



Jeff Wilson, PhD

# Brain Shift

Transform Your Life  
by Understanding  
and Changing Beliefs

# BrainShift

What would it be worth to you to understand and change what's keeping you from achieving the level of confidence, freedom, and income you deserve? *How would your life be transformed?*

How much better would your life be if you knew what other people were thinking and were able to ethically influence them quickly and effectively? *How would this transform your professional success, your relationships, and your ability to achieve your goals?*

## ***In BrainShift you will learn how to:***

- Break through limiting fears
- Negotiate and persuade more effectively
- Motivate yourself and others
- Solve problems quickly and efficiently
- Increase your self-confidence and self-reliance
- Reduce stress and create balance in your life
- And much, much more...

“With *BrainShift*, Jeff Wilson has identified and explicated a fundamental route to positive behavior change. His treatment of the role of beliefs is textured, accessible, and deserving of a wide audience.”

**Robert Cialdini, best-selling author of *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion***

“Rarely does a new discovery profoundly change the way we understand the world around us. Darwin’s theory of evolution and Einstein’s relativity are two such examples. And now Dr. Jeff Wilson’s research on belief systems opens up an entirely new understanding of the way we think and how we act, and provides the means to change ourselves for the better. *BrainShift* has given me the tools to focus, enrich and energize my world. The principles work for me every day, even years after learning them.”

**M.J. Harris, Project Manager**



Jeff Wilson PhD is president of BrainShift Inc., a consulting firm that specializes in training and coaching corporate, government, and small business clients in the process of ethically mapping and changing belief patterns. A professor at the University of Guelph, he has spent over 15 years studying and teaching about the impact that belief systems and thinking patterns have on all aspects of our lives. “My sincere hope,” he says, “is for you to use the ideas contained in this book to gain greater control over your own destiny.” He lives with his wife and two children on a farm in Ontario, Canada.

**[www.Brain-Shift.com](http://www.Brain-Shift.com)**

Jeff Wilson, PhD

# Brain Shift

Transform Your Life  
by Understanding  
and Changing Beliefs

**BrainShift**

Copyright © 2006, Jeff Wilson

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means without written permission from the author, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Wilson, Jeff.

BrainShift: Transform Your Life by Understanding and Changing Beliefs

ISBN 0-9780527-1-4

1. Psychology
2. Personal growth
3. Personal transformation
4. Success
5. Persuasion. I. Title.

For information about BrainShift contact:

Dr. Jeff Wilson,

RR1 Moffat, Ontario, Canada L0P 1J0

[www.brain-shift.com](http://www.brain-shift.com)

Book Design: Derwyn Goodall

Cover Illustration: Lino, represented by Anna Goodson

Chapter Two Diagram: Alison Birtles Fraser

Book Editing: Andrea Glass

# Acknowledgments

A number of people were instrumental in the creation of this book and I owe them a special debt of gratitude. Mary-Jo (MJ) Harris was the first person to see the Seven-Step Belief Model other than myself. Having tested the model with frankly astonishing results, MJ immediately suggested I write a book about it and has been one of my strongest supporters ever since. Next is Shannon Majowicz. Through our endless conversations, Shannon became one of the main sounding boards for what ultimately became the Belief Model—to the surprise of both of us.

Three authors had a profound impact on my thinking and laid the groundwork for my own work. Robert Cialdini introduced me to the psychology of influence and Jay Abraham to the fundamentals of marketing. Roger Von Oech, author of one of the best books on creative thinking ever written, opened my mind to the idea of non-linear thought, which was essential for the assembly of the ideas which are written here. My sincere thanks to my editor, Andrea Glass, who patiently walked me through the process of converting a draft manuscript into a finished book. Thanks also to Derwyn Goodall for his expert design advice and skills and to Lino and Alison Birtles Fraser for the illustrations. And finally, thanks to my dear wife Wendy and my children, Christopher and Meredith for their love and support (to say nothing of tolerance) throughout the writing and testing of BrainShift.

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 1 Believe It Or Not	6
Will you accept this challenge?	6
Resources	7
Strategies	8
Beliefs	9
The wealth dimension	10
Health, self and beyond	11
What next?	14
Applying Chapter 1	14
CHAPTER 2 How Your Mind Works	15
Understanding your “personal” computer	15
Your strategic inventory	19
How beliefs control human behavior	22
Mapping beliefs and strategies	24
Understanding your beliefs	29
Applying Chapter 2	34
CHAPTER 3 The Mind Manual	35
Three simple questions	35
Seven easy steps	36
Applying Chapter 3	43
CHAPTER 4 Mind Meld	44
Developing rapport	44
Matching and mirroring	45
Rapport in the seven-step model	48
Developing rapport with “difficult people”	50
Applying Chapter 4	52
CHAPTER 5 Belief Mapping	53
Step one. Ask yourself and others	56
Step two. Observe and question them	58
Step three. Check for consistency	62
Step four. Study beliefs in populations	66
Mapping your own beliefs	68
Applying Chapter 5	69

CHAPTER 6 How Beliefs Are Installed	70
Social proof	76
Momentum of commitment	77
Reciprocation	78
Rapport	79
Contrast	80
Authority	81
Scarcity	83
Consistency	84
Show the benefit	85
Eliminate the risk	86
The reasons why	87
Metaphor	88
Personal experience	90
Curiosity	92
Making an offer	93
Novelty	94
Specificity	95
Words and word patterns	96
Tonality and body language	98
Richness of the communication medium	99
Putting it all together	101
Applying Chapter 6	102
CHAPTER 7 Stacking Belief Installation Strategies For Maximum Effect	103
Moving yourself positively through a belief transition	105
Helping someone else through a belief transition	107
Belief installation in groups	110
Ineffective belief installation – attempted manipulation	113
Applying Chapter 7	115
CHAPTER 8 Installing New Strategies	116
Learning new strategies	116
Offering strategies to others	119
Where to find effective beliefs and strategies	119
Applying Chapter 8	123
CHAPTER 9 The Big Picture	124
A new discipline	124
The innovation age	125
A recipe for social progress	126
The collective unconscious	127
Your legacy	129
CONTACT US	130

# INTRODUCTION

The book you are holding in your hands is unlike any other book you have ever read. I guarantee it.

This is not a motivational book, although many people who have read it have found it highly motivating. Nor is it a “*self help*” book full of disconnected bits of advice and uplifting anecdotes, although the people who have been exposed to the ideas it contains have found them to be very helpful. After you have finished reading I’m confident that you will agree that this is a significant understatement, but don’t believe me — judge it for yourself.

Unlike a variety of well-known “*self-help*” systems, this book does not rely on visualizations, affirmations, mantras or similar exercises, although it does provide a framework for understanding how and why these work — or don’t — as the case may be.

A close friend who was instrumental in the creation of this book described these ideas as having opened her to **the most profound experience of her adult life**. That’s not surprising, for they are the thoughts of some of the greatest minds who have contributed to the subjects of the psychology of human development, motivation and influence that have ever lived. The purpose of writing this book has been to synthesize the ideas of these great thinkers into a practical, scientifically-based system that anyone can use to improve any aspect of their lives, including relationships, finances, work and health. *Does that sound like something you would find useful?*

In essence, *BrainShift* offers a powerful new approach to understanding why you think what you do, why you do what you do and how to change both so you can radically alter your life experience.



*After reading BrainShift you will:*

- Understand how your beliefs and thoughts control your behavior — and hence the results you achieve in your life
- Learn how to change your beliefs and thought patterns to achieve the results you really want as simply as you would change the software on your computer

As a result, you'll be better able to guide your life in the direction you desire.

You'll also find that to achieve your dreams, it will be necessary to collaborate with other people. By using the same process that you use to change your own belief system, you'll be able to understand the perspectives of others and assist them in changing their beliefs to their benefit — and yours.

And since, as will be revealed, all of our minds are connected — quite literally — the benefits of this process will apply not only to the immediate circumstances of your own life. *BrainShift* will also show how issues of global significance — like poverty, war and environmental degradation — will be solved only through a collective belief shift. And it will provide a basis for understanding how each of us can participate in that shift.

If you are dissatisfied with any part of your life and frustrated at making attempts to change it, this book is for you. As you come to understand and apply the concepts presented here, you will have the opportunity to greatly improve the quality of your life. And you will learn systematic, highly effective techniques to help others as well.

# CHAPTER 1

## Believe It Or Not

How this book came about may surprise you, because its creation certainly surprised me. Until a few months before I started it, I never imagined I would be writing a book at all, let alone one claiming to provide deep insight into the workings of the human mind. The combination of the ideas contained in these pages poured out of my mind onto the page one morning. I later realized they had been forming slowly, deep in my subconscious over a period of nearly 20 years.

It began with a question I had puzzled over for longer than I can remember. As a child, I recall being disturbed by the inequities of life, the radical differences in people's economic situations and how unfair life could be. Later, as a doctoral student in public health, I became involved in the environmental and social justice movements and had some success in helping to effect environmental reform in my community. I learned the impact that a small number of committed people could have on improving the quality of life, for themselves and others.

Furthermore, in my professional life, I began to appreciate the massive impact of simple interventions in improving the health of whole populations. For example, mundane things like seat belt laws or programs to discourage smoking could have a real impact on people's lives by improving their health and well-being, as well as preventing death and suffering. I also pondered a fact that is well known to public health practitioners: the strongest predictor of an individual's physical health is their income. Literally *wealth predicts health*. All of this led me to wonder about the basis for the inequities of wealth in the world and what could be done to bring about significant changes in the lives of the less fortunate.

**Will you accept this challenge?**

To show you how these musings led to the creation of this book, I'd like to pose a challenge for you to experience some basic aspects of how your brain maps reality. An effective way to do this is through imagining yourself in a situation where something of value has been taken away, such as being temporarily separated from your material possessions.

For some, this may involve feelings of discomfort, because it forces them to make a comparison with others who have less. So if you find yourself feeling that way, press on anyway to get the full impact of the experiment.

Here's the challenge. Pretend all your money and possessions are taken away, and you are cut off from your friends, family and other contacts, then dumped at the curbside of an inner city slum. You have 30 seconds to think about what you would do. *How would you get out, and how long would it take you?*

I've presented this challenge in different forms to many people over the years. What I've found is that for virtually everyone, the answer to the second question varies between one and 48 hours, depending on the way they interpret the challenge and the assumptions they make. Yet being concerned with issues of poverty and social justice, I have been confronted with a question that is on the one hand deeply troubling, while at the same time holds a key to human progress, both individual and collective: if we could escape from such conditions of abject poverty and deprivation, even when stripped of all of our physical resources, why is it that the majority of people born into such conditions will never escape?

### Resources

Without a doubt, the physical resources each of us has at our disposal play a tremendous part in keeping us out of such conditions. Most of those I associate with are lucky enough to have comfortable homes and enough money in the bank with sources of income to support their lifestyles. Most of us have cars, so we can go where we want, when we want. If we were to run into difficulties, for example, if our car broke down, we have friends we could call for help.

Compared to a person living in poor housing in an economically-depressed area, with no money or means to leave their immediate environment, and friends in the same or perhaps worse situation, we clearly have the advantage. Yet in our challenge, those we presented it to felt confident that even in the absence of money, cars, a nice home, friends and family, they would still be able to escape the slums whereas, on average, the person born or raised there would be unable to do so. Why is this?

Some may argue that luck plays a major role in our successful escape – being lucky enough to be born into families who encouraged and expected formal education and hard work, which led to acquiring skills to make a decent living and be surrounded with people in similar positions.

## Strategies

However, while it may have been primarily luck that got those of us where we are today, it is definitely not luck that would get us out of the inner city. A more important and predictable factor we have at our disposal is a *series of strategies* to help with our escape. Strategies are a set of simple, practical actions we would know how to do, or could even invent on the spot, to help us out of our predicament.

Back to the challenge. What would you do if all your money and possessions were gone and you were cut off from your friends, family and other contacts and dumped at the curbside of an inner city slum? Here are answers from some who have done this exercise:

1. To ensure immediate safety, I would quickly evaluate my surroundings, avoid suspicious-looking strangers then walk quickly and self-assuredly to the most prosperous-looking area I could find.
2. I would identify someone who could help, such as a storeowner or police officer. With their help, I would find appropriate social assistance, then get into some sort of shelter in as good a neighborhood as possible.
3. I would get any job I could and spend my evenings taking courses and studying; I would continually improve my training and job, build a new network of friends, find a new partner and build a new life.

What do you think? Not particularly elegant, but with a little tweaking most of these strategies would almost certainly work. What strikes me most about these strategies is how uncomplicated they would be to carry out. They wouldn't require any special intelligence or formal training. With dedication and persistence they would work every time, for anyone, barring unforeseen freak accidents or natural disasters.

Part of the answer to the question of what keeps some people in situations of deprivation, then, is that they lack access to strategies, which would allow them to escape. Most of those born into the inner city don't have strategies for effective studying or accessing readily available support networks that would give them practical ideas on how to improve their situation. Many are unaware of how to get and keep a job and/or how to leverage and upgrade their skills. Some may lack the insight, motivation or time management skills necessary to balance employment with obtaining an education.

## Beliefs

Access to specific strategies, skills or knowledge is clearly a serious impediment for people in such situations to improving their life. Yet, there is something even more fundamental to success than knowing what to do and being able to do it. It is the belief, regardless of the strategy, that *it would be worthwhile and that it would work*. Beliefs are a set of rules about how the world works. Examples of beliefs are: “I can do this or learn how” and “It’s okay to make mistakes.” Strategies, on the other hand, are actions taken to achieve a specific result and are often based on beliefs about what is possible.

Suppose you told a teenager living in poverty in the inner city:

*“Look—this is silly. There is no reason to subject yourself to this kind of life. All you need to do is study hard, get good grades, work part time and save enough money to go to college to get practical training to get a good job so you can move somewhere better. Once you’re earning decent money, you’ll be able to help your friends and family too.”*

One problem with this approach is that it presupposes a lot about that person’s beliefs. For it to have any impact, the teenager would have to believe:

- You knew what you are talking about and weren’t intending to lead them astray
- They would be happier and better off if they got out
- They would want to do things like get training or study hard

In many situations like this, people simply don’t have those beliefs. More often, they believe:

- Ideas like these won’t work for people like me
- I’d be better off doing what I’m doing now instead of attempting something else and risk losing what I have
- People like me don’t do well in school or get good jobs

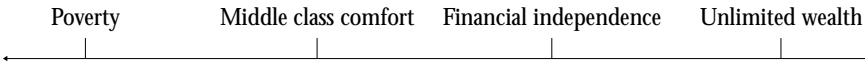
These kinds of beliefs lock people into situations that keep them from gaining the skills or strategies they need to improve their situation.

Great, you say. That was really useful. Now I have a foolproof plan in case I’m ever kidnapped and abandoned in an inner city slum. So what?

## The wealth dimension

Imagine financial success as a line (Figure 1.1). At one end sits the beggar in the street, while in the center is a person in a middle-class suburb. At the other end are people with financial independence and great wealth, like Bill Gates.

Figure 1.1. The wealth continuum



The “*So what?*” is the realization that our beliefs about what is possible and what works lock us into the point on that line where we choose to be. What does this mean? Suppose you are living a comfortable life in the suburbs, you have a good job, a nice home and you’re able to save money for a decent retirement. Now suppose someone like Bill Gates comes along and with your best interests at heart, says something like this:

*“Look—this is silly. There is no reason to subject yourself to this kind of life. Frankly, it’s beneath you. You’re just not living up to your potential and as a result, you’re suffering. If you got your act together, you could get out of that dead end job, get a nicer house and become financially independent. All you need to do is intensively study how to build a solid financial future for yourself, right now. You need to find people who have done this and get their help—do whatever it takes. Once you’ve learned how to do it, you’ll be able to help your friends and family do it too.”*

Sound familiar? It’s a little more uncomfortable when the shoe is on the other foot, isn’t it? Yet, the reality is that the same arguments you might apply to the person in dire poverty apply equally to you. What’s more, they apply to everyone at every point along the hypothetical wealth line.

Now, you might be saying, “That isn’t true. The person in poverty is in desperate need. They’re really suffering and need help. The person in the suburbs doesn’t need help. They may *want* more money and a fancier house, but they don’t *need* those things.” In fact, you might even argue that to expect more is just greedy.

I would argue that any judgment as to who on this wealth continuum

*needs* something and who simply *wants* it is entirely arbitrary. After all, who is to say what point constitutes a need or a want? For some, having three nutritious meals a day may be a bare necessity of life. For others living on the edge of society, it may be a luxury. Similarly, for the average North American, having a second home may be a luxury, while someone like Bill Gates might consider it a necessity. That any spot on the wealth continuum constitutes success is purely arbitrary. It is in the eye, or more accurately the mind, of the beholder and their own ideas of what financial success is.

**Where ideas like these come from and how to change them is the subject of this book.** These ideas are, in part, a product of each person's conditioning, i.e., their life experiences and influences regarding what constitutes an *adequate* level of financial resources.

Following this line of reasoning, what would be a reasonable response of the comfortable suburbanite to the suggestion that they should *escape* from the tyranny of their desperate situation of economic hardship? I would imagine many would be confused or indignant about any need to *escape* at all, while others might want to move to a higher economic plane, but be reluctant to make the effort, or not know how.

If we recognize that the person in poverty and the suburban dweller have essentially the same internal makeup, although they are at different points along the wealth line, the reluctance of the suburbanite to change makes sense. They have a set of beliefs comparable to their inner city counterpart, including:

- Ideas like the ones proposed won't work for people like me
- I'd be better off doing what I'm doing now instead of attempting some thing else and risk losing what I have
- It's wrong to want more than I have right now

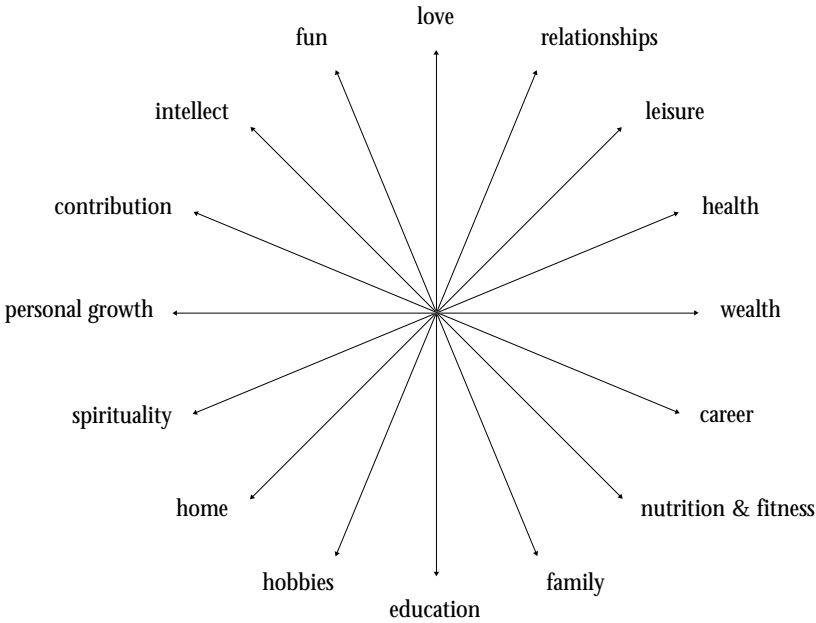
Just as the inner city dweller is doomed by their limiting beliefs to a life of poverty, people at each stage along the wealth line are prevented from reaching the next level by virtue of their own belief structure.

Health, self and beyond

Taking this line of reasoning a step further, consider that the wealth line is only one of a number of similar lines along which the quality of human experience can be measured. We could draw a health line consisting of death at one end, average health in the middle and Olympic sprinters at the other;

or a relationship line with sociopaths at one end and people with caring relationships at the other; or a fun and relaxation line, a personal development line, a line representing intellectual stimulation or spirituality—the possibilities are endless (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Dimensions of human experience



By applying the same principle as in the wealth line to other aspects of our lives (many of which are more important than money), we see how we are held at a point along each of these lines by our beliefs about where we belong, such as:

- I wouldn't want to change
- It's wrong to change
- I can't change
- I don't know how to change
- It would take too much time to change
- Changing would be too risky



The conclusion is inescapable. Our beliefs and strategies are the principal *controllable* elements preventing us from having the level of health, wealth and happiness we desire. This may cause you to wonder: if someone is happy with their current position in any area of their life, why would they want to change and why would they bother to change?

These questions can best be answered by examining the “hierarchy of needs” developed by Abraham Maslow, the father of American humanism. According to this widely accepted model of human development, each of us fulfills our personal needs according to a predictable sequence or hierarchy.

At the lowest level, we seek to fulfill the basic needs of human survival: access to air, food and water. From there, we strive to fulfill a second order of needs, such as material comforts and interpersonal relationships. These needs are then fulfilled in sequence, each successive level being satisfied only after the lower level needs have been fulfilled. At the top, we seek needs related to achieving wisdom, inner peace, a deep state of connectedness and contribution to others — a process referred to as self-actualization.

A key component of this model is the innate human drive to reach to the next level once the preceding level has been achieved. This is crucial to understand, because according to Maslow’s theory, it is not by satisfying a set of needs that we achieve fulfillment, but through the process of *moving to the next level*. Put another way, satisfaction in life is not achieved at the destination points along the way, but rather *during the process of moving* from one point to the next. In other words, *success is a journey, not a destination*.

With this in mind, it becomes apparent that regardless of our station in life and our current level of health, material possessions and relationships, we are all involved in a quest to move through a balanced progression upward through the important dimensions of our life experience. It is through this quest that we will achieve personal fulfillment.

Understanding the beliefs and strategies that allow us to participate fully in this journey is critical. Furthermore, a clearer understanding of the roles that physical resources, beliefs and strategies play in human development presents clues as to how individuals and groups living in conditions of misery might move to a higher level. Thus, the wealth line provides a metaphor, which demonstrates how individuals and societies can progress upward from a state of relative impoverishment of all forms, whether economic, intellectual or spiritual.

### What next?

You may be thinking, “This is fine but it’s too abstract. I can see that my current beliefs and strategies may be limiting me from taking the actions I should, but how do I identify those beliefs and change them? How do I figure out what to do next and form a concrete plan of action?”

If any of these thoughts are going through your mind, you’ve come to the right place. In the next chapter, you’ll discover a detailed, easy-to-understand model of how beliefs and strategies are organized in your mind. Then, you’ll see how to map your own thoughts (as well as the thoughts of others) and change them to achieve the results you desire.

### Applying Chapter 1

1. Buy a notebook today to write down your answers to the exercises at the end of each chapter. In your notebook, chart where you feel you are along all of the lifelines in Fig. 1.2. Are there any of these lines on which you feel it is particularly important for you to make progress? What would you have to do or have happen in order to feel you have progressed along these lines to your satisfaction? Jot your thoughts in your notebook and share them with a friend.
2. Limiting beliefs often take the form of the idea that something is too frightening, painful or difficult to do. Think of a problem that is bothering you or an area of your life you’d like to improve. In your notebook, write five beliefs you have that you think are holding you back from overcoming this problem or accomplishing your goal.
3. Now, write down five alternative, empowering beliefs, which if you had them installed at a deep level, would propel you toward your objective. If you’re having difficulty, consider the opposites of the limiting beliefs you identified in question 2.