Purpose:
The purpose of this activity is to gain a deeper understanding of one core value or belief that guides your daily life.

Description:
This I Believe, Inc., is an independent organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about core values. This I Believe is based on a 1950’s radio program of the same name. Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller and Harry Truman are just a few of the individuals who have contributed to the collection of essays. To this day, individuals across the nation write their own personal essays and submit them to be published online. ¹

Directions:
1. Before you begin writing, you will need to choose one core value, one you strongly believe in. Tip: Complete SA4 Identifying Values action guide first to help you identify your core values and prioritize what is most important to you. *Keep in mind that your belief does not need to be traditional. Examples: “I believe in nature”, “I believe in getting lost”, “I believe in my mother’s chicken soup”, “I believe in singing loudly”.
2. Next, go to This I Believe locate the explore tab, and click on featured essays. Listen to 2-3 essays featured on the radio. For hard copies of essays, ask your CAPE Coach.
3. Write your own This I Believe Essay. Follow the suggestions below to help guide you through this process of self-reflection.
   a. **Tell a story:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching- it can even be funny-but it should be real. Consider moments when your belief was formed, tested, or changed. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and to shaping your beliefs.
   b. **Be brief:** Your statement should be between 350-500 words. That’s about 3 minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.
   c. **Name your belief:** If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.
   d. **Be positive:** Say what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.
   e. **The essay should not be written in persuasive format**

   *The essay should not be written in persuasive format***
   e. **Be personal:** Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Try reading your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

¹ http://thisibelieve.org/

This action guide was adapted from http://thisibelieve.org/
4. Share your essay out loud with someone close to you or submit your essay online for publishing through http://thisibelieve.org/submission/#_EssayForm=first

**Reflection Prompts:**
When you meet with your coach be prepared to share your essay out loud. Also be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Was it difficult to choose your value for this essay? Why or why not?
- What was it like to remember a moment when your value was challenged or tested?
- Can you think of other moments when your values have been affirmed?
- How does this insight help you in the career and major decision process?