How To Write Your Own *This I Believe* Essay

**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 the shaping of your beliefs.

**Be brief:** Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. The shorter length forces you to focus on the belief that is central to your life.

**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.

**Be positive:** Say what you *do* believe, not what you *don’t* believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

**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.

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For questions or to submit your completed essay, email Molly Field at mfield2@richmond.edu