



HOW TO HAVE CONFIDENCE WHEN YOU'RE NOT IN CONTROL

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These days, when talking with friends and colleagues, I hear the same thing over and over again: People want to show up well despite challenges and setbacks. Leaders want to serve their team and clients with wisdom and confidence. Parents want to model resilience and level-headedness with their kids. The problem is, our vision doesn't always match our reality. Instead of showing up with confidence and resilience, we often find ourselves weighed down with worry and anxiety.

CIRCLES OF CONCERN

*"If you have control over an issue, why worry, because you can change it.
If you do not have control over an area, why worry, you can't control it."*

~ Dalai Lama

It is an important time to be mindful of what is within and beyond our control. In Stephen Covey's bestseller, "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," he introduces a model called Circles of Concern. The big idea is that for every frustration in life, you can quickly identify things that are beyond your control and things that are within your control.

Reactive people focus most of their time and energy on the things that are beyond their control. This results in a defeated, victim mentality. Effective people are clear on what is both within and beyond their control; however, they deliberately focus most of their time and energy on the things that are within their control. This results in an empowered, proactive mentality.

Here are a few examples of how I applied this thinking while navigating COVID-19:

BEYOND MY CONTROL

Other's behaviour and actions (or lack of responsible actions).

The declining stock market and its impact on my job and investments.

Missed goals and targets due to unexpected cancelled business.

WITHIN MY CONTROL

My behaviour and actions that helped limit the spread of the virus.

How I leveraged the unexpected time I had to improve my situation.

How I adapted budgets and strategy for sustainability.

BE PROACTIVE

It is impossible to spend 100% of our time focused only on what we can control. These are scary and unpredictable times. Our minds can easily and quickly drift into a place of worry and anxiety around “what-if’s?” and “now-what’s?”. That’s OK! It’s not helpful to beat yourself up. What is helpful is to recognize when this is happening, and to learn how to quickly bring yourself back to a healthy, proactive place. Here are some suggestions on how this can happen:

DO'S – Ways to stay focused on what you can control and be effective.

- **3 Deep Breaths** – when you sense yourself starting to worry about things beyond your control, pause, take 3 deep breaths, and think of something you can focus on that is within your control.
- **Seize the Day** – make a short list of productive things you can do that you never seemed to have enough time for in the past such as physical exercise, quality time with the family, or business development. Do these things!
- **Make a Difference** - use your time, talent and treasure to help those around you in need.

DON'TS – Ways to lose focus on what you can control and become ineffective.

- **Turn It Off** – limit the amount of time you spend following the news and social media. Program time limits into your phone and turn off notifications on all of your devices.
- **Shut It Down** – when you notice that conversations with friends and family are drifting into doom and gloom territory, either change the subject to something positive or end the conversation.
- **Focus on You** – stop being frustrated about what other people, companies and countries are or aren't doing to improve the situation. If you don't have the power to influence their behaviour, let it go and focus on what you can do.

RADICAL ACCEPTANCE

Recently a study was conducted comparing anxiety levels between first world North American women and Kenyan women living in the developing world. The study found the North American women (and men I would suspect) experienced significantly more anxiety than the Kenyan women. It went on to suggest that this was due to at least one key factor: The North American women were under the impression they were more or less in control of their lives and lived with unrealistic expectations and pressure that resulted in constant comparison and high anxiety. The Kenyan women on the other hand had radical acceptance of what was beyond their control. They accepted that this was the hand they had been dealt in life and focused most of their time and energy working with others in solidarity to make the best of the situation.

Next Steps:

- Given your current reality, what are 3 things that are beyond your control? What are 3 things that are within your control?
- In the past few weeks, what have you been focusing on the most? Have you been investing your time on what you can control, or have you been wasting your energy worrying about things that you can't control?
- When you look at list of the Do's and Don'ts on page 3, which ones stand out as a great challenge for you in the week ahead? What are other action steps you can take so that you spend more time being proactive in the coming week?

For almost 100 years people in the world of addictions and recovery have recited a prayer to provide them with focus and encouragement. I think today this is a prayer that all of us need to be reciting, sharing with others, and taking to heart:

*"Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."*



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