

Taking Control

According to psychologists, people who believe they are in control of their own destinies handle pressure better than those who believe that fate deals the cards. It is important not to use up valuable time and energy trying to control things which are outside of your influence. But there are many situations and events in our lives which we *can* take greater control over.

For each of the following, highlight things you could consider doing in order to feel in greater control of the situation.

<p>Responding to demands:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent excess pressure tomorrow by saying ‘No’ today. • Practise assertiveness skills e.g. “I understand that you need this doing by tonight, but I have to finish this piece of work as a matter of urgency so I’m not going to be able to do that for you on this occasion”. • Practise negotiation skills e.g. “I can do this for you, but I won’t be able to do it in the timescales you want” or “I’ve also got this piece of work to complete for you. Which is highest priority?” • Just because someone shouts loudly for something, doesn’t mean it’s the highest priority • Don’t see it as a sign of weakness saying ‘No’ – if it’s an unreasonable request, or is going to make you experience pressure or stress, then you <i>must</i> say so – otherwise you make a rod for your own back, and it’ll be you they come to next time they have an unreasonable request.
<p>Coping with your emotions:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t be too argumentative. Life shouldn’t be a constant battleground. • Once again, assertiveness comes into play. Take control of your emotions and of the situation. Look at the facts and respond accordingly. • If you think you may get emotional (angry or upset) then take time out before tackling a situation to calm down and plan your approach • Talk to someone whose opinion you trust if you’re unsure whether you’re over-reacting

<p>Improving your Time Management:</p>	<p>Good time management reduces pressure, indecisiveness and confusion, and improves your quality of life. Learn how to plan your time more effectively so that you can give yourself more freedom to do all the things you really want to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prioritise tasks - delegate where necessary - don't take on more than you can handle - complete one task before going on to the next - if you know this is an issue for you, get yourself some formal Time Management training <p>Simple changes like these will help you to feel in greater control of work.</p>
<p>Guilt:</p>	<p>What sort of things in your lives make you feel guilty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having to take time off work sick – the impact it has on the people who must cover for you whilst you're off – what good are you going to be if you're in the office when you're unwell? • not getting the right work-life balance – not spending enough time with your family/partner? – talk to them. If it's a short term thing, they may not mind. If it becomes the norm then they have every right to mind and you need to look at other control strategies to improve the situation. • not putting in as many hours as others? – it's what you accomplish in the hours you're there than how long you spend working <p>Guilt can be incredibly destructive and stressful because you're always beating yourself up about something.</p>
<p>Managing Change:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a positive attitude towards change – it's going to happen whether you like it or not, so there's no point in fighting it, or worrying about it • take an active interest in the changes going on around you – that way you'll feel engaged in what's going on, rather than feeling as though change is being imposed on you • recognise and acknowledge what you cannot change

<p>Dealing with self imposed pressure:</p>	<p>what do we mean by self imposed pressure?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. I've got to run the kids to this, that and the other. • I'm secretary for this committee • I'm on the PTA • I've agreed to take on this extra piece of work for so and so • I've got to clean the house • I've invited 12 people round for Sunday lunch, etc. <p>Are you too much of a perfectionist? – people who put themselves under constant pressure to achieve more, yet never feel satisfied, risk damaging their physical and mental health. Learn to recognise when you are asking too much of yourself, and accept your limitations.</p> <p>It's important to realise that sometimes just being "good enough" will suffice. Your value as a human being lies in who you are, rather than in what you achieve. Ask yourself if there is one area in which it is important for you to be your very best. Can you settle for being just good enough in some of the other areas?</p> <p>Take a long hard look at the self imposed pressure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is there anything you could lose? • what help could you get from others (e.g. I'll take the children to the birthday party and get someone else's parents to collect them) • count to ten before volunteering to organise the PTA jumble sale! • give yourself 12 months on one committee, then 12 months on a different committee • In roles such as being a parent, nobody achieves perfection. Try to simply enjoy what you are doing in the here and now.
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<p>Dealing with worry:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with one worry at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed. • Let go of the worry and focus on finding a solution • List all of the options available to you to help decide on a course of action <p>Excessive worrying wastes time and energy and makes it difficult to thrive under pressure. Understand why you worry, avoid doing so unnecessarily, and try to turn the worry into something productive.</p> <p>e.g. worrying that your bank will bounce a cheque – speak to your bank to arrange a temporary overdraft</p> <p>e.g. worrying that you won't meet a deadline for a piece of work – speak to the person you're doing the work for to let them know – it might be the deadline is negotiable, or they can nominate someone to help. Either way, you're keeping them informed ahead of the deadline.</p> <p>Can you remember what you were worrying about 12 months ago? 6 months ago? a week ago? Ask yourself will this really matter in a year?</p> <p>There's a great Swedish proverb: <i>"Worry often gives a small thing a big shadow"</i></p>
<p>Problem Solving:</p>	<p>A problem can be defined as "having a particular difficulty without having found an effective solution". Problems can be of a practical nature (e.g. difficulties with colleagues) or of an emotional nature (e.g. guilt) though in practice these two elements – the practical and emotional – often overlap.</p> <p>A great process for problem solving that you might like to make a note of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem identification: i.e. what is the concern? 2. Goal selection: i.e. what do I want? 3. Generation of alternatives: i.e. What can I do? 4. Consideration of consequences: i.e. what might happen? 5. Decision making: i.e. What is my decision? What action am I going to take? 6. Implementation: i.e. Now do it! 7. Evaluation: i.e. Did it work? How effective was it?