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Some days you feel in control and other days you don't. Some days everything marches to your beat and other days nothing does. When nothing is marching to your beat, you try to fix it but sometimes nothing works. Why does this happen? Why can't you gain control?

It all comes down to perspective. We often forget about the things we can control and the things we can't. Too often we try to control the things we can't change and don't try to control the things we can change, and this can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, or disappointment. If you're having these feelings often, it's time to take note of what you are trying to control and realize whether you can truly control it or not.

If the “thing” you're trying to control is “someone else” or the “thing” you're not trying to control is “yourself,” you will soon likely be losing control. In order to gain traction and regain control, you have to change your focus from outward to inward.

When it comes to other people, you can't control their:

1) *Actions.* People have their own thoughts that guide them in their decisions and actions. You may try to motivate or convince them to take a certain type of action, but you have no control whether they adhere to your suggestion or not.

2) *Opinions.* You've heard the old saying: “Opinions are like...everyone has one.” But opinions are not facts, not gospel, not anything. They may matter or they may not. They can be given but don't have to be received. You may try to influence someone's opinion but you can't guarantee your effort will be effective.

3) *Mistakes.* Other people's mistakes can have them rolling down a hill in a barrel, completely out of control. It should not become your problem unless you are standing in its path. If you are, simply step aside and let it roll past you.

Things you can control and things you can't

Perhaps you can use some technique to try and stop it. But most importantly, do not let it roll over you. If you have a tendency to let other people's mistakes become your problem, it's time to stop that immediately! Let people learn from (or help them learn from) their mistakes and hopefully they won't repeat them.

4) *Feelings.* People will have all kinds of feelings about all kinds of things. Their feelings are driven by their thoughts. You can try to influence their feelings on a specific matter by helping them think things through but you can't ensure they will feel the way you want them to.

When it comes to people's feelings, let them rejoice if they're happy, vent if they're angry, and initially comfort them if they're sad. If they're sad or angry all the time, get them help or let it be but don't become consumed with consoling them all day long, every day. When it comes to your children, though, get them professional help, if necessary, if they continuously feel sad or angry.

Initially you can impact someone's feelings by things you say (don't say) or do (don't do). A compliment could make them feel happy and confident or a critique may upset them. Normally your impact in this manner should only be short-term. People will, and should, regain control of their feelings if they so choose.

If you're trying to control “things” not deemed a “person,” keep in mind that you can only do so if you have the right resources, tools, or help. If you have a hammer, you can pound in a nail if you so chose. But there are also some things you have no control over like the weather, inherited traits, or the economy. All you can do with these things is accept them and adapt accordingly.

When it comes to yourself, you can control your:

1) *Actions.* You can choose to do anything you want if it is physically possible and you are unrestrained. If you can think about it and are capable, you

can control your own actions regardless of anyone's attempt at influencing you.

2) *Attitude.* You always have control over your own thoughts which in turn affect your attitude. Sometimes the world can throw you a wrench that distracts you, or someone says (doesn't say) or does (doesn't do) something that upsets you, but ultimately you decide whether or not to let any of these things impact your attitude for a long period of time.

3) *Behavior.* Despite your attitude, you control your behavior in any given situation. You can behave accordingly or not accordingly--the choice is yours. Others might tempt you into behaving in a manner unbecoming. If they do, don't take the bait. Deflect their tempts with mindful discipline.

4) *Effort.* You can choose to try hard, don't try at all, or anything in between. Obviously, the harder you try, the greater your chances of success are in the endeavor you're aiming for. Make your efforts effective and worthwhile. Choose to give your best effort in every scenario.

Lastly, I leave you with a prayer poem from Reinhold Niebuhr, an American Reformed theologian (you don't have to be Christian to appreciate and benefit from its wisdom):

Prayer for Serenity
God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;
trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You
forever in the next.

Amen.

~ The End ~