

Control vs Influence

WHAT YOU CONTROL · WHAT YOU INFLUENCE · WHAT YOU CANNOT CHANGE

Telling apart what you control, what you can only influence, and what lies entirely outside your reach can ease stress, sharpen clarity, and help you place your energy where it counts.

WHAT IS CONTROL?

You can directly determine the outcome. It rests on your own thoughts, choices and actions — yours to shape, even when it feels hard.

WHAT IS INFLUENCE?

You may affect the outcome, but cannot guarantee it. Other people and circumstances are also at play alongside your effort.

WHAT IS NO CONTROL?

Some things sit entirely outside your reach — you cannot change them directly, however much you may want to.

EXAMPLES

Not an exhaustive list — just an illustration of the differences.

WITHIN YOUR CONTROL

- Your thoughts and mindset
- Your behaviour and actions
- How you respond to situations
- Your boundaries
- The effort you put in
- Your self-care
- The choices you make
- What you say
- How you manage your time
- Seeking support

WITHIN YOUR INFLUENCE

- The quality of your relationships
- How you show up for others
- How you communicate
- The environment you create
- Team dynamics at work
- Raising awareness
- Encouraging change in others
- Contributing to solutions
- Setting a positive example
- The feedback you give

OUTSIDE YOUR CONTROL

- Other people's thoughts, feelings and choices
- The past
- Unpredictable events
- What others say or do
- Systemic or organisational decisions
- The actions of strangers
- Natural events (e.g. weather, illness)
- How long change takes in others
- Outcomes, despite your best efforts
- The future

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Helps you focus your energy where it makes a difference
- Reduces feelings of frustration and helplessness
- Supports clearer, calmer decision-making
- Can improve mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Builds resilience and a greater sense of perspective
- Helps you let go of what you cannot control

COMMON TRAPS

- Trying to control what isn't yours to control
- Taking on responsibility for others' feelings or actions
- Confusing influence with control
- Believing you should manage the unmanageable
- Feeling guilty when things don't turn out as hoped
- Giving up on what you could actually influence

REFLECTION

Use the questions below to explore your own experience.

1 · WHAT AM I CURRENTLY WORRYING ABOUT?

Is it within my control, my influence, or outside of my control?

2 · WHERE CAN I FOCUS MY ENERGY NOW?

What is one thing I can control or influence in this situation?

3 · WHAT DO I NEED TO LET GO OF?

Is there anything I am trying to control that is outside my reach?

Greater wellbeing often comes not from controlling more, but from focusing on what you can control and influence — and letting go of what you cannot.

SOURCES

Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Free Press.

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