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Can You Control It?

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Title: CAN YOU CONTROL IT?
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Web Address: <http://www.Overcoming-Depression.com>
Word Count: 823
Category: Self-Help

CAN YOU CONTROL IT?

A tremendous amount of stress occurs when you don't understand and accept your limitations. When you attempt to control something in life that is not within your sphere of influence how do you feel and react? What is it like for you to experience powerlessness?

Can you control another's thoughts, behaviors and attitudes? Are you able to make it rain or snow? Can you make a family or friend's cancer go away? It may be easier to consider these questions from a detached perspective and say to yourself, "No, I certainly cannot control these areas." However, it's surprising how much of life folks struggle over which is not within their control. More often than not, you are not aware

Can You Control It?

that your lack of peace has to do with controlling or worrying about something outside of your grasp.

Independence worldwide is growing stronger, and what a fine attribute to claim for yourself. Yet, as in many of the ways people and nations grow, the pendulum often swings too far. Nowadays it's considered a character flaw if you cannot control everything. Ever look at a parent and their child in public and think, "Boy, I sure wish she'd get control of HER child!" How much control can or should a mother have over a 6 year old child?

There are many organizations, beliefs and traditions to draw from when seeking help in this area of your life. A powerfully wise tradition is the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. To not be an alcoholic makes you fortunate, however, I hope you've been lucky enough to discover the wisdom of the 12 Steps. And for our discussion, the first step in particular. Let me list it for you here...

We admitted we were powerless over [alcohol] -- that our lives had become unmanageable.

I put the word "alcohol" in brackets because you may place anything in that bracket you'd like to. In fact, my invitation is for you to test it out with a few of the more nagging things in your life -- how about depression, anxiety, marital concerns, parenting issues, clutter, chronic pain...?

Attempting to control a thing in your life that is not yours to control will effectively make that, and other parts of your life, unmanageable. If you but ADMIT POWERLESSNESS in a heartfelt manner, much can be different for you. Here's the catch though... If you admit powerlessness you may judge yourself as a failure or someone else may do it for you. It takes tremendous courage and humility to admit when something is out of your control.

Admitting powerlessness in a situation does not remove responsibility. For instance, the alcoholic who admits powerlessness over alcohol is still responsible for the effects of his/her disease on everyone around them, as well as for their recovery today and in the future. This is covered beautifully in steps 2-12 of the 12 Steps.

Can You Control It?

There's a second catch though... a good one. There's tremendous freedom in a genuine admission of powerlessness. It's as though the heavy chains you've been locked into place with, fall to the floor. It's like taking your first big breath of fresh air after nearly suffocating. The weight of a burden is cast away and a different approach has its beginning.

Figuring out what you have influence over and what you do not can be a challenge. If you were to take a sheet of paper and create two columns, one with the heading "Can Influence" and the other with "Powerless Over," this will assist you in the process of determining what areas of your life go where. This will make this process simpler. There will be some areas you'll have to discern over. They will not conform easily to one side or the other, and there may be components of a problem which you can influence and other parts you cannot control.

Let's take an in-law problem, for example. This one would likely belong in both columns. You may not be able to control what your in-law does (area for acceptance), but, at the same time, you can set boundaries as well as decide what kinds of thoughts and behaviors you will display when this person is around you.

I'll leave you with another very popular tool to help you with achieving peace and joy in your life. We know it as The Serenity Prayer. It was originally spoken in a presentation given in 1932 by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr. It was the ending to a much longer prayer. Here is how we know it today:

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God,

Grant me the SERENITY
To ACCEPT the things I cannot change...
COURAGE to change the things I can...
and the WISDOM to know the difference.

Amen

Take the necessary steps today to unburden yourself of just one area of your life that you are powerless over. You can do it. You will discover a new freedom by taking this unique action today.

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Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!