

CONTROL THE CONTROLLABLES

In conversations I've had with people recently, two of the most common work-related stressors discussed are the uncertainty of the situation and the lack of control they feel at the moment. One activity useful for stopping worries related to lack of control comes from military personnel, who are often required to make quick decisions under stressful situations. To do so, they assess the situation and its demands by asking themselves two questions:

- 1) Is this in my control or not? (Grip vs Gravity)
- 2) Is this important or not?

The answers to these two question allows them to decide how to respond to the situation.

	<u>GRIP: IN YOUR CONTROL</u>	<u>GRAVITY: OUT OF YOUR CONTROL</u>
IMPORTANT	<i>FIX IT</i> Response: Act	<i>ACCEPT IT</i> Response: Accept and Act
NOT IMPORTANT	<i>ELIMINATE IT</i> Response: Eliminate	<i>IGNORE IT</i> Response: Integrate and Act

You can use this same decision making process to help you to filter your focus and minimize your stress. First, write a list of the challenges (physical and mental) you are facing right now and decide where you would place them in the grid. Placing things in the “not important” category can relieve your stress since it enables you to remind yourself to eliminate or ignore it because it doesn’t matter anyway. With uncontrollable yet important factors (ie, working from home), you must mentally accept the situation and decide what actions need to be taken based on the reality that exists, not the reality you want. The majority of your energy should be focused on the “grip/important” category. These are key tasks you have the most control over so you will gain positive energy when you accomplish them.

For many people, uncertainty falls into the “gravity/important” category because it creates strong emotions. There’s no denying that uncertainty will be there whether we want it to be or not, so its existence is out of our control. However, I would encourage you to consider moving it to the “not important” category since the importance we place on the unknown is a matter of perception and you can actually choose to make it unimportant. A phrase the military uses to prepare for uncertainty is “Optimize to the X”. Sometimes you don’t know what X is but you do the best you can with the facts you do have. Much like with algebra, you simplify, you solve for what you can, and you eliminate as many variables as possible. We’ve all been in fire drills, prepared plays to make a last-second shot, and practiced shootouts under pressure -- this preparation is what allows us to optimize ourselves for uncertainty. In those instances, we don’t know for sure if we will be successful, but we know we have a plan in place so we can be efficient and effective in our execution.

To put it simply, we know that our mindset is totally in our control. We know that our work processes have been altered, but are still generally controllable. We know that our success when things get back to “normal” again will be the result of these two controllable factors. Therefore, the outcome isn’t as uncertain as it may feel because we have the right formula (Process + Mindset = Success) in place and the right people to execute our processes.

Make it Great!
Aimee