



### *Exercise 6*

## **What You Can and Can't Control**

A large part of the work of Self-Awareness, of sorting out your own human confusion, is paying attention to *what you actually can control* and *what you can't control* in the present moment. You can sort this out by making two lists under these headings, similar to Exercise 3: Separating Fact From Fiction. Examining your 'worries', in contrast to conscious actions, in your journal, is an effective way of bringing the light of reality into the picture. What you can control, you can act on when it is possible to act on it. What you can't control in any given moment, reality dictates that you must let it go. This exercise in clarity is absolutely essential to gaining the ability to see life in the right perspective and for being empowered. Being free of worry is essential for your mental/emotional and also physical wellbeing.

As usual, read the whole exercise through before you start, in order to help you gain a better feel for it. Be Aware always that there is no perfect way to do any of these exercises. The more you have a go at doing them, the more Awareness they will help you gain and the more skilful you will become in your own process of healing and growing.



## Exercise

1. In your journal, write in detail about the problem or issue that you want to deal with.
2. Without trying to analyse it or edit it, describe what you think and feel about the situation and the people concerned. Put your raw emotions and thoughts on the page.
3. Take two separate pieces of paper and place a different heading on each one. On the first piece of paper, place the heading, ‘**What I Can Control**’ On the second piece of paper place the heading, ‘**What I Can’t Control**’. Now prepare to be absolutely honest with yourself.

### What you can’t control

1. On the ‘**Can’t Control**’ page, read through the notes that you have written about the problem that you want to deal with and list, in point-form, all that you are worrying about, but can *not* actually control in this present moment.
2. For example: you can’t ultimately control what other people think, say or do. In this present moment, you can’t act on a moment in the future. You can’t control what has happened in the past.

### What you can control

1. Now, in your ‘Can Control’ page, write down, in point-form, all that you actually *can do now* to take care of the situation that your mind wants to worry about.
2. This may include doing some research; creating a step-by-step action plan; processing your fears and vulnerabilities using this exercise, or any other exercise in the book; beginning a dialogue with someone that you are worrying about, in order to patiently develop lines of communication.

### Processing

1. Read again what you originally wrote about the issue and then go back over each list and adjust and refine where necessary.
2. When dealing with other people, note that you can encourage, motivate and inspire people, but you can’t control, manipulate or force people and expect a positive outcome. Usually you need to face and process your own fears and vulnerabilities first, in order to be a positive example for those you wish to motivate. There is a lot you *can* do to gain more skill in positively influencing people. Learning positive communication skills is one of them.
3. Nevertheless, every adult must make their own way in life. Every adult has a right to make their own mistakes. Life is our ultimate teacher, whether we are ready to learn the lesson or not. We cannot predict when someone else is going to be ready to face themselves. This is never an easy thing to do. This law of life also applies to teenagers, increasingly so as they mature into adulthood.
4. It can be hard to let go when a loved one is taking themselves down a self-defeating path, and are refusing to take responsibility for their thoughts and actions. When we try to control and ‘fix’ the situation, often we are just encouraging unhealthy dependency, which usually only delays the inevitable, or we become the target of the person’s discontent, because we couldn’t perform a miracle and make their problem go away and make them happy.

5. It is important to remember that a person’s unhappiness is usually rooted in their own self-rejection, which leads to them making poor life-choices. Until they learn to love themselves more, their problems will continue, no matter how much we try to help.
6. Seeking help from a counsellor and studying literature about ‘co-dependency’ can help us learn how to untangle ourselves from another’s downward spiral. We can learn how to be there for them in ways that are actually constructive, without disrupting our own lives in the process.
7. What is always with you in the moment is your own mind. When examining what you have written, you will notice that much of what is in your ‘can’t control’ list is what your mind is imagining about the future, or about other people. Taking care of your mind and processing your thoughts and emotions/feelings is something you can always do in the moment, which will then place you in a state of greater self-mastery in the next moment. This is what you can always do in order to take care of your future.
8. Remember, everything you think and do now, is creating your future from day-to-day. This is how powerful you are.
9. Now return to your ‘Can and Can’t Control’ pages and look squarely at the reality of what you can’t control/do now.
10. If there is nothing more you can actually *do* to take care of the situation now, in order to have peace of mind, you must therefore let it go, until as such time that you can actually *do* something more.
11. Remember, thinking is not doing. Thinking is preparation for doing. If you try to do with your thinking, you will cause yourself nothing but stress.
12. Therefore, what you can always control now is your own peace of mind, by taking Full Responsibility for your thoughts with Compassionate Self-Acceptance and clarity.

