



Maintaining Control

How many times in the last few weeks have we heard something like “in this time of uncertainty”? You’re probably tired of hearing this, because the more the word “uncertainty” is used, the more the anxiety goes up. Bryan Robinson, Ph.D., states that the brain equates uncertainty with danger. This can cause an individual’s stress reactions to kick in, which can increase a person’s anxiety. In an article, Robinson outlines studies that demonstrate that the unknown is often more detrimental. For example, he cites research that shows job uncertainty takes a greater toll on an individual than being fired.

With everything that is going on right now, it is important to remember that we only have control over ourselves. If we try to manage things outside of our control, we are only going to become frustrated, negative, and scared. In his book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” Stephen Covey described the Circle of Influence and Circle of Concern. The Circle of Concern are all the things that impact our lives – our health, family, jobs, nuclear war, COVID-19. Some of these things we have control over, and others we do not have control over. Covey goes on to state that the things we have control over are in our Circle of Influence. Within the Circle of Influence are the things that we can work on and influence for the betterment of our life. If we hope to stay positive, we must refocus on the things that we can influence and push aside the things that others are doing that we have no influence over. This empowers us to be solution-focused, make good choices, and practice good self-care.

The biggest question right now is: What do I have control over?

And the simplest answer is ...

- **You can control how much social media you look at**, and when and where you get news. Constantly watching the news and scrolling social media will just bring about more frustrations and fear. Remember to only get information from credible sources.
- **You can follow the recommendations from the CDC**, such as practicing social distancing. Remember that social distancing is not a lockdown; it means keeping interactions to a minimum.
- **You can control your attitude**. If you allow yourself to look at the situation negatively, then you are allowing fear and anxiety to shape the way you look at things. Try to find the positive in the situation, even if it’s through a feel-good story or video. Here are three ways to assist in finding positivity:
 - **Be grateful** for the fact that you are safe or that you have supportive family or friends. Also be grateful for the small things, like sunshine, Netflix, or the ability to work in your pajamas.
 - **Celebrate the successes**. What has been a success in your life and organization? Maybe it’s a smooth transition to people working from home, your children keeping up with their schoolwork, or making it through the day on only one cup of coffee.
 - **Smile** at people on those ZOOM meetings, the people walking by, or at your partner who you are now working next to.

The Village EAP is taking COVID-19 very seriously and we are working to provide the best continued services to you. If you feel like you or an employee could benefit from talking to a counselor and have our EAP contract, please contact The Village EAP at 1-800-627-8220 to access your free and confidential sessions.

We are here so you don’t have to go it alone.

- **You can find fun things to do.** By limiting your social media and news consumption, there is now more time to fill with enjoyable activities. Explore websites or Pinterest to find new and different things to keep yourself and your family busy.
- **You can show grace and understanding to the people around you.** Not everyone is going to handle this situation the same way that we do. This means that we will have to set aside our judgment and be supportive of the people around us without sacrificing the healthy boundaries we need to protect ourselves.

Refocusing our energies on what we have control over helps us to get traction when we feel stuck, empowers us to explore our options and make good choices, and changes the lens we look through from helplessness and despair to possibility and options.

References

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