

## Dealing with Unwanted Circumstances

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Controlling your mind isn't for wimps. Trying not to think about something is almost impossible. For example, if you have financial challenges, how do you tell yourself not to think about your financial challenges? Or health issues? Or family, work, or relationship problems? Everyone experiences frustration, fear, anxiety, or worry, but that doesn't make it easy. Putting something out of your mind that is disconcerting is very difficult, especially for people with a high degree of innate conscientiousness.

If you, your family, or your employees can't find peace of mind during difficult circumstances, you run the risk of constant distraction at best and health problems at worst. Stress, worry, and their many side effects can make life miserable. Poor sleep, hormone imbalances, and adrenal fatigue rob you of your joy. High blood pressure can kill you.

What do you do when confronted with circumstances you don't want to think about? How do you care less about something than your mind allows? What do you do when barraged with frustrating circumstances that are largely out of your control?

As with most of the intangibles in life, the answer is "it depends". It depends on you. Even though you may have little control over your circumstances, your reactions to them are still up to you. You can worry, complain, or whine. You can be apathetic or flippant. You can ignore them and hope they go away. You can be depressed. You can take drugs. You can try to do something about them. Or you can change your thinking about them. How you react to circumstances is up to you and only you. You control you.

You may rightly point out that even you can't control everything about you. Many of your physical, mental, and emotional traits are inherited or deeply ingrained in your subconscious. Nevertheless, when dealing with or tuning out circumstances, you draw upon your own abilities, whatever they are. Your attitude, effort, and skills are the tools at your disposal.

Fortunately there are options for dealing with unwanted circumstances and achieving peace of mind.

To start with, make note of your unwanted circumstances. Write them down. Don't let them be vague concepts or feelings. Addressing clear issues has higher odds of success than addressing vague ones. Frame your troublesome circumstances in specific words that make clear what you are experiencing. Most importantly put them in terms of what you control. Here are a few examples: "I get upset when Mark blames me for his mistakes", "I don't get to see my kids enough", "I don't receive credit for my contributions at work", "Every weekend I work while my friends play", "I am frustrated by my elderly parent's lack of exercise." Notice these issues are in words that you control. State them as your problems, not others'. Remember, you don't control others. You only control you. Make a list and inventory all of the difficult circumstances you want to address. Realize the more you have, the more they will overwhelm you and the more important it is to confront them.

Once you have your circumstances identified, here are ten principles to follow in addressing them:

1. **Repeat this:** “*I can only control me. I can only control me.*” Remind yourself that you are the solution and only you are in charge of you. You will do what you reasonably can and that is all you can do. Focus on yourself. (Warning: despite this overemphasis on a self-focus, 9 out of 10 people will fail at this first principle.)
2. **Keep things in perspective.** Reflect on what you are grateful for. Remind yourself of all that you are fortunate to have including your abilities, resources, relationships, and experiences. Keep a handy reminder of the things you most appreciate.
3. **Don’t give attention to the undeserving.** Don’t take matters seriously that don’t deserve it. Don’t give energy to those who are untrustworthy. Dismiss the remarks of hecklers. Don’t major on the minors.
4. **Accept yourself and all your mistakes.** Realize you can’t change the past. Don’t ruminate on it. Learn what you can from your circumstances, then look forward. What is done is done. Appreciate that you are smarter and more experienced than you were before.
5. **Take the high road.** Maintain your own high standards and values. Don’t lower yourself to other’s low standards. Don’t react to or engage in other’s wrongdoings. If they continue, they will self-destruct on their own.
6. **Create a plan.** Create an action plan of what you will do. Focus on that which is within your control and influence. When calm and logical, identify the actions you can take to improve your circumstances.
7. **Implement good daily habits.** If they are not already in your action plan, start doing that which you enjoy and takes you in the direction you want to go. Include activities such as exercising, meditating, reading, writing, listening to music, and working on hobbies.
8. **Have faith.** Know that if you maintain honorable values, hold respectable motives, and do what you can, you’re doing your part. There are no guarantees, but do your best every day and be satisfied you’re doing all that you can.
9. **Build a support team.** Surround yourself with people who support you. Spend time with people who build you up and provide wise counsel. Talk with people who have experienced similar circumstances and can empathize with you.
10. **Move on.** If you’ve tried to deal with your circumstances to the best of your ability, but they remain intolerable, you may need to move on. You may need to change jobs, end a relationship, physically move, or alter your environment in some way. Do it with sound judgement.

As American businessman Nido Qubein said, “*Your present circumstances don't determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start.*”

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