WHAT AM I TRYING TO CONTROL?

PURPOSE

To find all the things you are trying to control that you simply cannot. In here is the source of a vast amount of your frustration.

You can't win a fight with something you don't control. You can only stop fighting it.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Go wide in Step 1. Aim for 15 or more. Most people find twice what they expect.
2. Be specific. Not "my family". "Whether my son does his homework."
3. Steps 2 to 4 go deep on your top 6.
4. Page 4 is where you let go. Say it out loud, then sign it.

Why this works. Fighting what you can't control keeps your mind and body stuck in stress, and it rarely changes the thing. People who let go of what they can't change, and put that energy where it works, are happier. Letting go is a skill, and you can learn it.

WORRY AND RUMINATION (OTTAVIANI ET AL., 2016, META-ANALYSIS) · LETTING GO OF GOALS (WROSCH ET AL., 2003 · RIDDELL ET AL., 2025, META-ANALYSIS) · ACCEPTANCE (GLOSTER ET AL., 2020, REVIEW OF META-ANALYSES) · ILLUSION OF CONTROL (LANGER, 1975) · DICHOTOMY OF CONTROL (EPICTETUS, ENCHIRIDION 1)

STEP 1 List everything you are trying to control that you can't. EVERYTHING

If you check it, chase it, replay it, nag about it or lie awake over it, it goes on the list. Use the map to look in every corner.

THE PEOPLE CLOSEST TO ME
My partner's mood. My kids' choices. My parents. Whether they change. Whether they call.

WORK
My boss. My team. Decisions above me. The promotion. Clients. Whether the deal closes.

HOW I'M SEEN
What people think of me. Being liked. Being understood. My reputation. Being judged.

TIME
The past. The future. How fast things happen. Waiting. Getting older.

THE WORLD
Traffic. The economy. Prices. The news. Politics. Crime. The weather.

MY BODY AND MIND
A feeling showing up. My heart racing. Blushing. Sleep. Illness. Thoughts I don't want.

THE SNEAKY ONES
Outcomes. Being right. Being certain. Things being fair. Nothing going wrong. Other people doing it my way. Other people seeing what I see.

What do you keep fixing that never stays fixed? Write that one down too. Then circle the 6 that take the most from you.

1 ◯ _____
2 ◯ _____
3 ◯ _____
4 ◯ _____
5 ◯ _____
6 ◯ _____
7 ◯ _____
8 ◯ _____
9 ◯ _____
10 ◯ _____
11 ◯ _____
12 ◯ _____
13 ◯ _____
14 ◯ _____
15 ◯ _____
16 ◯ _____

HOW I TRY, AND WHAT IT COSTS

STEP 2

Your top 6. How do you try to control each one, and what does it cost you?

Tick how you try. Guess the hours a week, including the hours in your head. Then the hard question: has it ever worked?

	WHAT I'M TRYING TO CONTROL	HOW I TRY	HOURS a week	WHAT IT COSTS ME Sleep, mood, people, money	HAS IT EVER CHANGED IT?
1		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse
2		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse
3		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse
4		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse
5		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse
6		☐ checking ☐ nagging ☐ worrying ☐ replaying ☐ avoiding ☐ over-planning ☐ people-pleasing ☐ arguing	___ hrs		☐ yes ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ made it worse

Add up the hours: _____ a week. × 52 = _____ hours a year on things I can't control.

THE SOURCE OF MY FRUSTRATION

STEP 3

Find the link.

Think of the last three times you lost your temper, snapped or felt helpless. Look for them in your top 6.

1 **Which of these is behind my biggest frustrations?**

2 **What do I keep demanding that it does? Finish the sentence.**

It should...

3 **If I keep fighting this for five more years, what will it cost me?**

STEP 4

Find the part that IS yours inside each one.

Every one of these has a part you control. It is almost always one of these:

MY RESPONSE | MY EFFORT | MY WORDS | MY BOUNDARIES | MY ATTENTION | WHEN I WALK AWAY

Like this. Can't control: my boss's mood. Can control: how prepared I am, what I say, and what time I leave.

	I CAN'T CONTROL	BUT I CAN CONTROL
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

LET IT GO

STEP 5 **Let go of your top 3.** OUT LOUD

Pick the three that cost you the most. Write each line in your own words. Then read it out loud. Letting go is not giving up. It is putting your hands on the part that is yours.

1

I can't control _____

I can control _____

I'm letting go of _____

What would I stop doing tomorrow if I truly accepted this?

_____

2

I can't control _____

I can control _____

I'm letting go of _____

What would I stop doing tomorrow if I truly accepted this?

_____

3

I can't control _____

I can control _____

I'm letting go of _____

What would I stop doing tomorrow if I truly accepted this?

_____

COMMIT The old habit will come back. Decide now what you'll do.

If-then. When I catch myself _____ , I will _____ .

"When I catch myself checking if she's read my message, I will put the phone face down and go back to what I was doing."

The hours I get back each week: _____

I will give them to _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Most of what you fight to control was never yours. Put it down.