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## Understand and Manage Yourself

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***The article focuses on infinite and inexhaustible capacities of human beings' thought process, which remains restricted to understanding and managing 'oneself'. It emphasizes the self-control techniques that facilitate a person in understanding, analyzing and managing oneself better and provides with a nine-step strategy towards developing self-control.***

**B**efore you read this chapter, answer the following four statements indicating against it how much it is true of your behavior, using following guidelines.

Write 3 if it is almost always true of you or if you almost always behave or feel this way; Write 2 if it is fairly true of you, or you quite often behave or feel this way; Write 1 if it is somewhat true of you; and Write 0 if you seldom or never feel or behave this way.

1. I get angry when I am criticized.
2. I do not hesitate in expressing my disagreement.

3. I find it difficult to accept others' opinions if they are different from mine.
4. I avoid confrontations (frank unpleasant discussions).

Man is a thinking and an industrious being. He thinks and makes efforts. However, his thinking is not so much about himself as the beyond. He thinks about the body, and his dress, about the house and his food. He thinks about the means of comfort and convenience and many other similar matters, but keeps himself out of the purview of that thinking.

Man worries about what other people are doing, what they are not doing, and what they should be doing. But he has no time to think about what he is doing, what he is not doing and what he should be doing. Some people do have time for it, but they are not inclined to think about themselves. Some people do think about themselves but they are not able to act accordingly. If they could do it there would be no need to think afresh about self-management.

Man has infinite capacities. It can as well be said that his capacities are inexhaustible. But he is not able to use his abilities because the key is not with him. Sometimes, it so happens that he has the key, but his abilities are just wasted...

There was a miserly businessman who owned wealth worth crores of rupees. He spent all his wealth to buy diamonds and emeralds. He kept them in a trunk and locked it. He always kept the key of the lock with him. He did not trust his children. Hence, he never handed over the key to anyone. One night some thieves entered the house. They found that particular trunk. By the time they came out of the house some people woke up. They told the businessman "some thieves have carried away your trunk". The businessman said, "They are fools. What would they do with the trunk? The key is here with me".

Honest effort is needed to awaken one's inner abilities. Even before making the effort, it is necessary to aspire to be something. Most people drift with the current – they follow the path of enjoying physical pleasures. But those who wish to be something and are willing to go against the current, who wish to turn away from sensuous pleasures and follow the path of self-restraint, would divert their souls against the current.

## **What is Self-control?**

Self-control is a set of behaviors which:

- Accepts the reality that the only thing in life, which you can successfully change and control, is yourself.
- Keeps in check all self-destructive, addictive, obsessive, compulsive, irrational, and unacceptable behaviors.
- Gives you a sense of personal mastery, autonomy, and competency over your own life.
- Is under your control and power to direct and orchestrate with no need for interference or manipulation from others.
- Makes you the master of your own destiny because it keeps in check those barriers and obstacles which are a threat to your overall success in life.
- Is a middle ground between perfectionism and laxity in self-care.
- Results in your life having a balance and focus by helping you to cope with new challenges in life as they come.
- Helps you to keep your over-emotional responses in check or moderation.
- Helps you to open yourself up from non-feeling or pulled-in emotions so that you can have a healthy emotional life.
- Is the foundation for healthy coping and contributes to your accepting personal responsibility for your life.
- Keeps your life in moderation, helping you to avoid extremes in any direction.
- Is the focus of the efforts to let go of the uncontrollables and unchangeables in your life so that you can concentrate on yourself.
- Eliminates the need for you to be manipulative, helpless, fixing others, intimidating, overdependent or a caretaker of others.
- Helps you to be detached from others and to keep your relationships in a healthy balance of give and take.
- Reflects your inner desire to grow up into a mature, responsible adult.

## **What are the Negative Effects of not Maintaining Self-Control?**

If you cannot gain self-control in your life, you could:

- Focus all your attention on trying to control, fix, or rescue other persons, places, and things and divert your attention from your own needs.
- Suffer the negative impact of your out-of-control behaviors such as alcoholism, chemical dependency, overeating, compulsive sex, addictive relationships, compulsive shopping, gambling, smoking, etc.
- Become deeply depressed and despondent over your weakness and inability to get your life into “check” or “balance”.
- Prefer to be overly dependent on other helpers, caretakers, fixers, and rescuers to give your life the control it needs.
- Fall prey to an overly perfectionistic and idealistic belief system in which no matter how well you get things in order you see them as being imperfect and not good enough.
- Lose control over the emotional boundaries you need to maintain from becoming over-enmeshed or controlled by others.
- Become lost as to where you begin and end and where others in your life begin and end in relationship with you.
- Find yourself responding to situations in your life either in an overly emotional and hysterical way or in a withdrawn, pulled-in and non-emotive way, with neither response being healthy nor appropriate at the time.
- Find it impossible to become detached from people, places, or things who are toxic or unhealthy for you.
- Find yourself in a state of powerlessness to effect changes to get your life into moderation or balance.
- Fall into the trap of learned helplessness and convince yourself that you are not capable of taking care of yourself and thus, allow your life to get more and more out of control.

- Seek out caretakers, fixers, or rescuers to help you solve your own problems and get your life under control.
- End up convinced that there is no way you can get your life into balance because the amount of work, effort, energy, and resources needed is too great an investment just for you when there are so many other people, places, and things on which you could better focus attention.
- Experience even lower self-esteem because of your inability to believe enough in your worth and value to take action to get your life into control.

### **How is Self-Control a Control Issue?**

Self-control is a control issue because it is:

- Keeping the “locus of control” internal and removes the “locus of control” from the externals in your life.
- Giving to yourself the power and control to have an impact on your personal destiny and fortunes.
- Ensuring your focusing on what in life you have the ability to change and control, namely yourself.
- Not allowing yourself to fall into the trap of using manipulation or helplessness to get others to come to your rescue to fix or care for you.
- Not needing a “fixer” or “caretaker” to help you determine your own future.
- Not allowing survival behaviors to get in your way of reaching out for support, intimacy, and vulnerability from others in your life.
- Exercising moderation in your emotional reaction to life so that you are neither overcontrolled nor undercontrolled in the expression of your feelings.
- Accepting responsibility for your own actions, feelings, thoughts, and life and giving power to yourself to accept the consequences for all of these.
- The lack of needing anyone else to “fix”, “rescue” or to take care of you, to make you successful in life.
- Being aware of people who are trying to control or exert power over you and you take the steps to change this.

- Exercising your control and power over those things, people, or places to which you have a compulsive or addictive attraction so as to put them into a moderate or abstaining relationship with you.
- Exercising realistic and rational power and controlling your life.

### **What Irrational Thinking Leads you not to Exercise Self-Control?**

- There is no sense in trying to gain control over this, since I'm going to fail at it anyway.
- There is no way I will ever be able to gain control over my behaviors.
- I'd rather have others do it for me.
- I prefer to have others monitor my behaviors and make me suffer negative consequences when I falter.
- If I no longer need them in my life to assist me gain control of myself, then they no longer will be interested in me.
- If I become too independent and in control, I'll be unappealing to them.
- I've never been parented in a healthy way and it's my turn now to get parented.
- I'm never going to grow up; it's too boring.
- I'm young yet, so, why do I need to act old?
- They'll just have to put up with me the way I am.
- I was like this before you met me and you knew who I was then, so don't try to change me now.
- I feel overwhelmed by all the responsibilities involved in being an adult.
- If they want me to change, then they'll have to work hard to make this happen.
- I like myself just the way I am.
- There is too much to change, so why try?
- Why do I always have to do it for myself? Why can't others, just once, do it for me?

- It's so much easier to know what others need to do for themselves than it is for yourself.
- I've never had any luck in the past in controlling these behaviors so why should I expect to do better now?
- I hate trying to take charge of my life. It is always so tough and I never feel good when I do it.
- Loneliness is the major result of self-control and it keeps me from working harder on self growth.
- I'd rather be "sick" than lonely.
- All this "centering on self" stuff is absurd and nobody I know really does it so why should I?
- I'm so addicted I could never change.
- If you can't be 100% successful in changing, then why try in the first place?
- I hate myself so much for being weak, how could I ever make it straight?
- Giving up my old behaviors would change me so much that nobody would ever like me.
- I can't live with it but I can't live without it.
- My anxiety and frustration get worse when I try to control myself.
- I enjoy what I'm doing. Why stop now when I'm having fun?
- No one is going to tell me what I have to do with my life.

### **How you can Develop Self-Control**

In order to develop self-control you need to take the following steps:

**First:** You first need to identify in what areas of your life you need to gain more self-control. Review the following life arenas and identify any issues you may need to take control.

**Second:** Once you have identified the various issues in which you need to develop more self-control, then you need to identify which emotions tend to lead

you to be more out of control with these issues. Use the list of emotions and feelings clusters to identify for each issue out of control, which emotions or feelings tend to exacerbate the loss of control.

**Third:** Once you have identified what feelings and emotions tend to exacerbate your loss of control, then identify what irrational beliefs lead to increased loss of control in each of these issues.

Emotions which Lead to being Out of Control	
Emotion	Feeling cluster
Boredom	Listless, unoccupied, restless, uneasy, a need for novelty, change, or excitement
Anger	Rage, hate, cheated, infuriated, spiteful, mean, mad, or envious
Guilt	Ashamed, miserable, remorse, blamed, distraught, or pain
Depression	Left out, ugly, empty, powerless, victimized, suffering, useless, low, sad, helpless, discouraged, or troubled
Anxiety	Overstressed, out of control, nervous, overwhelmed, uneasy, tense, pressured, panicked, troubled, confused, or shocked
Loneliness	Unwanted, unappreciated, left out, ignored, unloved, alone, hurt, neglected, ugly, or rejected
Fear	Afraid, tense, anxious, nervous, weak, worried, skeptical, frightened, threatened, panicked
Excitability	Eager, driven, energetic, capable, turned on, enthusiastic, motivated, or clever
Comfort	Proud, refreshed, appreciated, satisfied, accomplished, useful, respected, content, confident, full, calm, or relaxed
Happiness	Good, nice, glad, loved, pleased, wanted, wonderful, delighted, or beautiful.

**Fourth:** Then you need to identify new, rational, reality based, healthy thinking which will lead to your gaining control over these issues. Some self-affirmations are:

- I can gain control over this.
- I am capable of controlling myself.
- I will take control of my behaviors.
- I can succeed in containing my compulsive/addictive behaviors.



- I am able to take one behavior at a time and keep it under control.
- It took a long time for me to become this way and it will take time to get it under control.
- I am a human being and not a perfect being, so, if I relapse and lose control, it is OK as long as I get back on the wagon again.
- I can be rational, realistic, and healthy in my thinking, emotions, and actions.
- Changing old behaviors takes effort, time, and a motivation to change and I am willing to give all three of these to gain control of my life.
- I am a capable, lovable person who deserves to let go of the uncontrolled ways of my past so that I can grow, flourish, and be successful in my attempts to gain control in my life.
- I am the one person in my life whom I can control and change and I choose to do so.
- There isn't any thought, feeling, or behavior of mine I can't gain control over.
- I will make time for the work to develop my self-control.
- I will be a healthier person once I focus my efforts onto controlling of myself.
- Between handing over to my Higher Power the uncontrollables and unchangeables in my life and developing emotional detachment from the toxic relationships in my life, I will grow in self-control.
- I will cease using manipulation, helplessness, and overreaction with the people I am overdependent on.
- I will establish healthy, emotional boundaries between me and the people in my life.
- I will cease trying to fix, rescue, enable, correct, or change the people in my life.
- I will gain emotional support for myself when my emotional state is contributing to my behaviors getting out of control.
- I will work at moderating my thinking, emotions and behaviors so that I am able to have a balance in my life.

**Fifth:** Once you have identified healthy self-talk to help you through this time of gaining self-control, then you need to identify positive actions or behaviors which will assist you to develop self-control in your life. Such behaviors or actions are:

- Stress reduction and relaxation work.
- Time management; planning, and scheduling.
- An aerobic exercise program five to seven times a week.
- A balanced diet.
- Thought stopping.
- Anger workout.
- Spirituality and enhancement.
- Motivation enhancement exercises.
- Development of an emotional support system.
- Altering relationships with people, places, and things.
- Creative problem solving.
- Reading self-help books.
- Changing patterns or routines of daily life.
- Self-affirmations work.
- Use of rational and realistic thinking.
- Sublimating the urge to drink, eat, smoke, use drugs, have sex, shop, gamble, or some other self-medicating behavior by handing it over to your Higher Power.
- Development of goals and objectives to be met on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly schedule with self-monitoring of their achievement and refinement.
- Permission to support system to “call you on it” when you revert to old patterns of thinking, feeling, or behaving.
- Avoiding settings, which arouse negative emotions.

- Diverting your attention from the old patterns of desires, temptations, or urges.
- Talking out feelings with a support person.

**Sixth:** Once you have identified the set of healthy actions, which assist the development of self-control, then develop a plan of action for each issue which is out of control for you.

**Seventh:** Once your plans of action are developed, implement them one at a time, taking one issue at a time to get under control. To decide which issues to take first, prioritize the issues using the following scale.

**Highest Priority:** This issue is so out of control that your life is in danger.

**High Priority:** This issue is so out of control that your physical and mental health are in peril.

**Average Priority:** This issue is out of control and it affects your thinking and emotions so that you get compulsive or obsessive with it.

**Slight Priority:** This issue is out of control but it presents no current threat to your life, health, or actions.

**Eighth:** Once you have prioritized the issues to be worked on, then begin to implement the plans of action to get them under your control.

**Ninth:** If after a time you find that you are still out of control, then return to first step and begin again.

### Understand Your Scores

Now look at your scores. Reverse the responses on items 1, 3 and 4, so that a response of 0 becomes 3, 1 becomes 2, 2 becomes 1, and 3 becomes 0. Total these responses. This gives you your score on self-management. Your score will range from 0 to 12. A score of 6 can be used as the cut-off point. A score of 6 and below indicates low self-management and above 6 indicates high self-management.

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