THE CONTROL DECISION TREE

PURPOSE

To take a problem, an annoyance or a stressor and work it all the way to the end: a clear action, or a clear decision to let it go.

Every problem ends one of two ways. You act on it, or you accept it.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pick two problems in Step 1. Start with the one that costs you the most.
2. On pages 2 and 3, answer each question. Tell the truth. Tick yes or no, then follow the arrow.
3. Every path ends in Take Action or Accept. Fill in the box you reach.
4. Page 4 is where you own it. Sign it.

Why this works. Worry feels like doing something, but it changes nothing. Asking "Can I do anything about this?" and then "When and how?" turns a worry into a plan or a decision to let go. People who decide exactly when and how they will act are far more likely to do it.

THE WORRY TREE (BUTLER & HOPE, 1995) · CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE (COVEY, 1989) · COPING FIT (CHENG, LAU & CHAN, 2014, META-ANALYSIS) · IF-THEN PLANS (GOLLWITZER & SHEERAN, 2006, META-ANALYSIS)

THE CONTROL METHOD · 5 STEPS

The tree on pages 2 and 3 is these five steps drawn out.

1. Is it in my control?
2. If not, can I influence it?
3. If yes, what can I do about it?
4. If no, let it go.
5. If it's in my control and I'm not acting, accept and own the outcome.

STEP 1

Pick two problems to put through the tree.

A problem, an annoyance or a stressor. Take them from your Sorting Your World sheet, or from today. Write each one as one clear sentence. Not "work". "My manager keeps changing the deadline."

PROBLEM 1 _____

_____

IT COSTS ME ☐ sleep ☐ time ☐ mood ☐ people ☐ money

PROBLEM 2 _____

_____

IT COSTS ME ☐ sleep ☐ time ☐ mood ☐ people ☐ money

? **How long have these been on your mind, and what has the worrying changed?**

_____

_____

ONE WALKED THROUGH

THE PROBLEM	IN MY CONTROL?	CAN I INFLUENCE IT?	AM I GOING TO?
My manager keeps changing the deadline.	No. I don't set the deadlines.	Yes. I can ask for the final date in writing.	Yes.

TAKE ACTION

When the next change comes in, I will reply the same day and ask for the final date in writing.

AND ACCEPT

I accept that dates will still move. When it comes back into my head, I will check what's mine and get back to work.

PROBLEM 1 · WALK IT THROUGH

STEP 2 **Put problem 1 through the tree.** TICK, THEN FOLLOW THE ARROW

Start at the top. Be honest at every box. "No, I'm not going to" is a real answer. Just own it.

PROBLEM 1 · MY PROBLEM, ANNOYANCE OR STRESSOR — COPY IT FROM PAGE 1

_____

_____

IS IT IN MY CONTROL?

Can I do it myself, without anyone else saying yes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

YES

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Every option. Even the small ones.

_____

_____

_____

AM I GOING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?

☐ Yes ☐ No

WHEN AND HOW?

Day, time, place, first step.

_____

_____

_____

TAKE ACTION ↓

ACCEPT ↓

It's mine, and I'm choosing not to act. That's allowed. But own the outcome.

RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY

NO

CAN I INFLUENCE IT?

Who could I ask, tell, show or help? Even a little.

_____

_____

☐ Yes ☐ No

HOW, AND WHEN?

What will I say or do, and when?

_____

_____

_____

AM I GOING TO?

☐ Yes ☐ No

TAKE ACTION ↓

ACCEPT ↓

My choice. Own it.

ACCEPT ↓

Not mine to control or influence. Let it go.

EVERY PATH ENDS IN ONE OF THESE TWO BOXES. FILL IN THE ONE YOU REACHED.

TAKE ACTION

When _____

I will _____

_____

I start on _____

ACCEPT THE OUTCOME · NEVER WORRY AGAIN

I accept that _____

_____

When it comes back into my head, I will

_____

PROBLEM 2 · WALK IT THROUGH

STEP 3 **Now put problem 2 through the tree.** SAME RULES

This time, notice where you want to skip a box. That's usually the box that matters.

PROBLEM 2 · MY PROBLEM, ANNOYANCE OR STRESSOR — COPY IT FROM PAGE 1

IS IT IN MY CONTROL?
Can I do it myself, without anyone else saying yes?
☐ Yes ☐ No

YES

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?
Every option. Even the small ones.

AM I GOING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
☐ Yes ☐ No

WHEN AND HOW?
Day, time, place, first step.

TAKE ACTION ↓

ACCEPT ↓

It's mine, and I'm choosing not to act. That's allowed. But own the outcome.

RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY

NO

CAN I INFLUENCE IT?
Who could I ask, tell, show or help? Even a little.
☐ Yes ☐ No

HOW, AND WHEN?
What will I say or do, and when?

AM I GOING TO?
☐ Yes ☐ No

TAKE ACTION ↓

ACCEPT ↓

My choice. Own it.

ACCEPT ↓

Not mine to control or influence. Let it go.

EVERY PATH ENDS IN ONE OF THESE TWO BOXES. FILL IN THE ONE YOU REACHED.

TAKE ACTION

When _____

I will _____

_____

I start on _____

ACCEPT THE OUTCOME · NEVER WORRY AGAIN

I accept that _____

_____

When it comes back into my head, I will

_____

OWN IT

RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY

If it's in your control, the outcome is on you.

That includes your health habits, your learning, your effort, your preparation and your attitude. No one else is coming to do them for you.

STEP 4

Destroy your common excuses.

Write the excuses you use most. Then write what is really in your control. Then what you'll do instead.

Like this. "I don't have time." → "I decide what goes in my diary." → "Twenty minutes at 6am, before anyone else is up."

MY FAVOURITE EXCUSE	WHAT'S REALLY IN MY CONTROL	WHAT I'LL DO INSTEAD

? **Where in my life am I waiting for someone else to fix something that is mine to fix?**

COMMIT

Look back at your two trees first.

I'm taking action on... _____

I'm letting go of... _____

If-then. When _____ , I will _____ .

Pick a moment that happens every day. "When I sit down at my desk, I will send the email first."

I will check back on this on _____

Signed _____ Date _____

If it's in your control, the outcome is on you. So is the win.