

Control the controllables!



Question: What are the things that deserve your time, your focus and your attention?

Answer: The things you are responsible for and can control and can do something about! And NOT the things you're not responsible for, that you don't control and can do very little about.

Here are just a few of the things you are not responsible for and don't control. *Inflation, recession, the world's supply of energy, government regulations, competition, corporate policies, the weather, and what other people say and do.*

Now you might say *"Hold on, Weldon, if I don't do something about those things, who will? I can reduce my energy consumption, I can reduce my drain on our natural resources, I can write my government officials about legislation, and I can offer corporate policy suggestions to my top management."*

Well, yes, you can. And even though you're affected by those things, and you're concerned enough to do something about them, you're not really *responsible* for them. There's a big difference. Here's an example to illustrate that point. Not long ago I was flying from Phoenix to New York to conduct a seminar. Because the plane was fairly quiet, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation of the two passengers in the row behind me talking about the high price of oil. Gradually their discussion became more heated and it continued for most of the flight. When we landed in New York, we all got up out of our seats, waiting for the door to the jetway to open. As we stood there, I glanced over and noticed how exhausted these two men were from their 4½ hour discussion.

I couldn't resist asking them, *"Are both of you in the oil business?"* They looked puzzled and said, *"No, not at all. We own retail stores in Phoenix. We're going to a buyers convention in New York. Why do you ask?"*

With a big smile and in a joking manner I said, *"I couldn't help overhearing your conversation, and if you're not in the oil business, you just spent about four and a half hours discussing a situation you can't do anything about."* They thought about that for a minute. Then they looked at each other, laughed, and one of them said kind of sheepishly to his buddy, *"You know, he's right."* Later, in thinking about it, I realized that between the two of them, they had wasted a total of nine hours! They could have spent that time talking about creative ideas for their business, or marketing strategies, or leadership ideas, or improving their customer service, or any number of things that they ARE responsible for, and CAN control, and CAN do something about.

So what are the things that deserve your time, your focus and your attention? The things you CAN control? When you think about it, it really comes down to your attitude, your opportunity awareness, your self-improvement, your creativity, your values, your goals, your focus, your disciplined use of time, your sense of humor, and your commitment. You could also add to this list your enthusiasm, your preparation, your loyalty, persistence, knowledge and service, because those ARE your responsibilities. Those ARE the things you're responsible for and can control.

Cont'd on pg 2



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Cont'd from pg 1

Are you taking care of your responsibilities? When you do, your example influences others. When you accept absolute responsibility and refuse to make excuses, others catch on also. You become a role model.

So to help others in your family, your friends and your business associates use this concept, here's a specific way to use the "control the controllable" concept. Next time you're faced with a difficulty, challenge, circumstance, problem, event or situation that's impacting you, take a piece of paper and write down the situation. Then draw a line vertically down the middle and write on one side "Things I can Control in this Situation" and on the other side, "Things I don't Control."

So let's say you were a third member of the group behind me on that flight to New York and you saw where your two friends were heading with the discussion on the price of oil.

What are the things you could have written down on the "Things I DON'T Control" side? Here's a start. *The current price of oil. The future price of oil. When the price will go up or down. How much it will go up or down.*

Okay, now let's go to the other side. What CAN you control about the price of oil? Okay, go. I'm waiting... Come on... Let's see it...

Okay, you get the point! There's very little you or your two seat-mates could do about the price of oil. Now, however, let's say you discussed creative ideas about what the three of you could do in your businesses and personally about this oil crisis. Now something positive might happen! Imagine if the three of you spent that entire hour flight writing down good ideas. Here's what might come up:

- Provide transportation for your customers to save them gas.
- Offer a special promotion or drawing for a free tank of gas.
- Have a promotion to give away bicycles to save gas.
- Sponsor a walk-a-thon ... Burn calories, not gas.

You get the idea. Focus on what you can control and are responsible for! But as you know, it isn't easy, because almost every day you're bombarded with negativity. Dire predictions about the economy or world politics, like this one you may have seen ...

"It is a gloomy moment in the history of our country. Not in the lifetime of most men has there been so much grave and deep apprehension. The domestic economic situation is in chaos. The dollar is weak around the world. Prices are so high as to be utterly impossible. The political caldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty. Russia hangs as usual like a cloud - dark and silent upon the horizon. It's a solemn moment. Of our troubles, no man can see the end."

Well, that article was written in October of '57 ... that's 1857, four years before the Civil War! There were natural disasters, business failures, job layoffs, poor crops, social problems, and government debt. I guess some things just don't change!

Recessions happen. It's a cycle of the economy. Economies grow and expand, and then come down again — recessions, even depressions, are events that do occur.

So if somebody asks you about the effects of the current economic crisis, just say, *"The recession? Oh, I've decided not to participate."*

And if that sounds unrealistic, just ask Bill Horner, in Dallas, Texas, if he was able NOT to participate in the last recession.

He'll tell you, "absolutely".

You see, Bill worked for a company that built new homes. He was in my seminar audience at another time when the housing industry was quite depressed.. I recommended to Bill and his other sales associates that they just not participate in the recession!

Later, Bill wrote me this letter.

Just a note to tell you, Joel, since your seminar I decided to take responsibility and write down what I would do with new home sales from August 25th through the end of September. I wrote down that I was going to get 20 sales. But I didn't. I actually got 24 sales in 34 days! Plus I sold another 32 homes in the next 61 days! So thanks for the ideas. Isn't it great that we're in a recession and there are hard times!

Your friend who's not participating in any recession!

Bill Horner.

How to beat a bad mood

With a little effort, you can put it behind you

Are you having one of those days—or weeks—when every little thing seems to annoy you? Are you wondering if your little black cloud will ever disperse, letting the sunshine in again? Even if you do nothing about it, your grouchiness will probably pass eventually with time, but with a little effort you can put it behind you much faster.

1. Stop and LISTEN to what's on your mind. Be your own best friend and give yourself an empathetic ear. What exactly is it that's bothering you? What are you feeling? Disappointment? Resentment? Jealousy? You'll be amazed how much better you feel just by this simple process of unburdening yourself, TO yourself!
2. Take a hike! That's right, a brisk walk can do wonders towards lifting your spirits, raising your energy level, and clearing your mind of those dark clouds, even opening the way to creative solutions to some of those worrisome problems!
3. Give yourself a pep talk. Here again, being your own best friend is the key. What would your "ideal" friend say to you if he or she wanted to

give you a morale boost? Okay, YOU say it to your self! There, that wasn't so hard, and to your subconscious mind, it feels just as good, whether you say it or someone else does!

4. Re-focus on your goals. Remind yourself of the direction you want to be heading. Don't let anything distract, deter or derail you from your priorities. Zoom in on them, and let your laser focus cut through your gloomy thoughts and recharge your mental batteries.
5. Remember to laugh at yourself. If you don't, everyone else will! So don't take yourself seriously, just take what you DO very seriously. Think of it this way, the size of your funeral will be determined by... the weather! That's right! If you live in North Dakota and die in January, you're out there all alone! No one's coming! So keep your sense of humor always.

Here's what you can do: *Hopefully, if you were in a bad mood when you started reading this, you're out of the doldrums by now, so MAKE it a great day, every day!*

And then... keep smiling

*"A smile costs nothing, yet creates much.
It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give.
It happens in a flash and the memory of it can last forever.
No one is so wealthy he can get along without it.
And no one is so poor that he is not enriched by its benefits.
It creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business,
and is the countersign of friends.
It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged,
sunshine to the sad and nature's best antidote for trouble."*

Author Unknown

Jobs don't have futures, people do!

General demoted to garbage collector He reflects glory on the work

Epaminondas was a very successful general who lived in Greece around 400 B.C. Brilliant military victories earned him the respect and admiration of many. But his fame also caused him to be the target of jealousy. A few evil men feared Epaminondas and conspired to claw and tear him down from his position of influence.

That would seem to be impossible, but a clever plan was devised. The conspirators convinced Greek officials that Epaminondas could help the nation even more if he was transferred from the military into the civil government. They claimed he was the only person talented enough to solve one of their most severe urban problems: **waste disposal**.

They called it "scavenging" and it was an enormously miserable task. The cities were filthy. Everyone agreed Epaminondas was the only man for the job. He was called home from the military and appointed Head Garbage Collector!

But Epaminondas was a wise man and he recognized this as merely an attempt to humiliate him. So he nobly accepted the position and set out with great enthusiasm to be the **best** garbage collector Greece had ever known! He said, "If the position will not reflect glory on me, I will reflect glory on the work."

And he did. The conspirators were foiled by his willingness to enthusiastically accept a challenge and transcend even the most hopeless situation. In a short time, everyone was praising Epaminondas' achievements as garbage collector.



Here's what you can do: *Enthusiasm is a small but powerful "extra" which you can add to your work. And you should be enthusiastic because, as you probably know, it's one of the best ways to get others to want to help both you and themselves. When you're enthusiastic, there is no room for anything negative. Criticism is automatically converted to praise. You begin recognizing the value in almost everything, and you find yourself acting and talking positively. At almost no cost, enthusiasm builds spirit and cooperation. You can use it as an effective means of diplomacy and persuasion, or even as a polite and gracious bid for attention. Best of all, as long as you're enthusiastic, you'll never be bored!*

When faced with an undesirable task, don't let yourself become smaller. Don't shrink to the size of the job. Make it as enjoyable as possible by doing it the best way you know how. Become even greater than the job! Enthusiastically rise above it and stride on to more worthy challenges.



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P.O. Box 6226 Scottsdale, AZ 85261
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Editor: Judy Weldon.

Executive Assistant: Debbie Giebelhausen.

Cartoons: Brad Hall.

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