

Josh, this is from 68-76 in the Control Therapy Training Manual
2.3 GOALS REVISITED: CHOOSING THE “RIGHT” MODE(S)
CONTROL MODE DIALOGUE

Control Model Dialogue to help the client choose which mode might be best for them. This can be helpful in working within a client (and yourself) to gain “the wisdom to know the difference: i.e. does the client want to learn to change and improve (courage to change), to learn more self-acceptance. The mode dialogue helps the client figure out which MODE they wish to choose. This can be confusing, as your question above suggests (e.g. how much do I really want to change, how much is that too passive to just accept; how to work on the judgmental part (overcontrolling part of myself). The control Mode dialogue is a way to kindly invite oneself to explore what do YOU REALLY Let me invite you to try that. with yourself and your client.
<https://controlresearch.net/control-therapy-manual.html>

(You’ll also note in the back of the manual where there are client handouts. One on decision making and one on Control Mode Dialogue. They are for the therapist to give to the client (and you’ll find that all the handouts (at intro of Client Handouts provide references in the manual itself where they topics are more fully discussed

So hope this helps, Please go through it and see if it speaks to your “ambivalences” and the question you raised. Also look back at your SCI profile; which modes of the four quadrants were you strongest in (and which did you want to increase/decrease. (Just FYI, no need to share with me). Dr. S

Whether from a theistic perspective (Niebuhr’s prayer) or a non-theistic perspective (Chinese philosophy of dongjing), one task each of us faces in selecting our goals is whether we want to have the goal of being more assertive and making changes; or being more yielding and accepting—toward the situation, our self, and/or others. Although sometimes the goal may seem clear and easy, there are other times when a major task is actually figuring out what our goal is, and then determining the relationship of the modes to that goal. To facilitate this process, there is an exercise we have developed called the Control Mode Dialogue.

This exercise is an opportunity to explore in more depth your views and beliefs about the different control modes based on your prior control stories and dynamics. Further, the exercise can help clarify goals, based on your control profile and the current situation and concern. The process also helps pinpoint any resistances you might have to positing different positive modes as aspects of your goal. We would like you to experience this exercise yourself by going through each of the steps described below. The exercise can be done in dyads during the training session, if utilized in a class situation, or by making notes in your control journal, if you are reading this manual as a practitioner’s guide. While going through the exercise, we will also illustrate the process through a clinical example.

The **first step** in the mode dialogue exercise is to become as clear as you can about your views toward each of the four modes, and then try to ground those beliefs in specific situations or memories. What are specific times when you have used each mode?

You may want to review your journal (from Module One) where you explored your test results on the modes (Scales 5-8) while also referring to the handout of the 4 modes/quadrants. To further explore the modes, it can be helpful to look at the adjectives that comprise each mode by reflecting with your dyad partner (and yourself) on specific situations and issues that come to mind when looking at the adjectives you either endorsed or rejected. You may also want to look

at your preferred mode (item 11), including which modes you wanted to increase, and which you wanted to decrease.

What is the mode you use most? Which least? Which would you *like* to use most? This is a way to help you explore your “control story” and a way to begin to see how to *match* your goals to your control profile.

The *second step* in this exercise is to look again at each mode, one quadrant at a time, and come up with an image, color, or character that those adjectives suggest, some representation that encapsulates the mode for you. Once you have that representation, it is then possible to actually create a dialogue between different modes which will help you explore in more depth each mode individually, and as they interact with each other.

In order to help facilitate the understanding of this second step, we have divided it into sub-steps A-F. We are going to illustrate and model this process with a clinical example.

A. CREATE A REPRESENTATION OF EACH NEGATIVE MODE.

As a way to ground this exercise and model its use, let’s take a look at the situation with Jane, a 44 year old female attorney who came to therapy complaining of feeling stressed and anxious, and in particular had concerns about her interactions with her mother-in-law, who was always criticizing her and putting her down.

THERAPIST: What are your choices?

JANE: I don’t know. I’ve tried everything. I’ve yelled and screamed at her. I’ve tried to ignore her. She’s just horrible.

THERAPIST: If you were to look at this sheet of paper, (handing her the Four Modes of Control handout Appendix 3.0) which quadrants would you say best describe your current responses to the situation?

JANE: Well, my yelling and screaming are clearly this negative assertive, quadrant 3. I identify with the words tense, rigid, withholding, aggressive, selfish. And my feeling so victimized and helpless seems like negative yielding, quadrant 4. I identify with the words manipulated and indecisive, and sometimes past-oriented because I just stew over the things she has done to interfere in my marriage, even back to when we were dating.

In exploring a representation of each of those modes, Jane described her negative assertive side as a fierce, tough, callous drill sergeant; and her negative yielding side as a rag doll lying helplessly in a hospital bed.

In your dyads (or four your journal), please make sure that each of you have now generated a “representation” of your negative modes.

B. EXPLORE FEELINGS ABOUT THE NEGATIVE MODES, AND CHOOSE A PREFERENCE

THERAPIST: And how do you feel about those two aspects of yourself?

JANE; I hate them.

THERAPIST: If you had to choose between being considered too assertive and overcontrolling or too passive and yielding, which one would you pick?

JANE: Well, my own mom is very possessive and overcontrolling, and my mother-in-law is so interfering. So I guess if I had to make a choice, I would say that I am more afraid of being too controlling. I'd rather just see things work out. I don't like the anger in me, and I don't like feeling stressed all the time, especially around her. It just doesn't seem to be a healthy use of my energy. I guess that's a long way of saying that I'd rather be in the hospital bed than be putting someone there!

Again, in your dyads (if a class situation) or in your journal (if this is being used as a practitioner's manual), please discuss your feelings about each negative mode, and which you would choose as the preferred one. You may want to explore what aspects of your past experiences and beliefs (i.e., your control story and dynamics), and/or the current situation are involved in your "preference."

C. CREATE A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE 2 NEGATIVE REPRESENTATIONS.

Although it may feel awkward at first to "play act" different parts, it can be helpful in recognizing the different (sometimes conflicting and paradoxical) control stories we have operating. Engaging in this dialogue can make you conscious of your resistances, and the reasons for them.

JANE: The rag doll patient says, "I give up. Nothing I do is good enough. What's the point? I'll just lie here and wait for her to finish. No use fighting. That hurts more; better to just take it and pretend I'm somewhere else." But after a while, the warrior says, "She can't do this to me! I want her to get out of my life and stay away! I can't stand her butting in. If she wants to ruin my life, then I need to give her a taste of her own medicine!"

To summarize the insights that emerged from Jane's dialogue, she realized the positive role that each of these aspects of herself was trying to play. The rag doll side helped ensure that she did not put herself in scary, dangerous situations where she could be hurt and which caused her enormous stress. In her hospital bed she was safe. The rag doll also served as a counterbalance to the unrelenting, hard-driving task-master, drill sergeant side. In some ways, the rag doll was trying to keep the drill sergeant safe, removing her from battle.

The drill sergeant, on the other hand, felt she had worked hard to be taken seriously and "I don't appreciate others just walking in and telling me what to do." Further, even though she was pretty critical about her own work, she admired the high standards she has set for herself. Stress is just a part of life, and can make you stronger. She saw her task as standing up for the passive, lazy rag doll, and motivating and disciplining it. The toughness and warrior-like ferocity were necessary to compensate for the lifelessness of the rag doll, including the rag doll's fear of responsibility and the accountability that comes with it. This exercise helps us recognize that there are multiple perspectives and that each mode of control, even the negative ones, may

be trying to help protect us in some way. It can be helpful to learn to befriend these different perspectives, even as preparation for choosing a positive goal.

D. WORKING TOWARD CHOOSING A POSITIVE GOAL.

The Control Mode Dialogue up to this point is an exercise designed to help each of us (as well as our clients) learn how to make peace with and move toward “letting go” of the negative modes. *The negative modes are not goals.* It is unlikely a person would say, “Oh, I want to be negative assertive.” Or “I want my goal to be negative yielding.” These negative modes are (often reflexive) reactions to situations, or feelings about how we’ve acted in situations. What is important to recognize thus far in this exercise is that the negative modes are efforts to “control the world,” and that they can be understood at some level as trying to help protect and serve your best interest. However, even though their *intentions* may be good, their methods are generally not especially effective or skillful. Learning and understanding their purpose and intent, <i.e., once the two “negative modes” can (anthropomorphically!) feel understood and appreciated>, helps lessen “sub-conscious or non-conscious” resistance toward selecting and clarifying the best goal(s) for the situation.

THERAPIST: As you can see, your two negative modes are trying to help you out. But they are also causing you to feel stressed, and don’t seem to be improving the situation. What would you like to see happen—what are your goals?

JANE. I’m not really sure. I know it can’t go on like it is. I know that yelling and screaming is not my goal! But I’m so frustrated. I’d like to find some way to get along better with my mother-in-law.

THERAPIST. And what would that mean to you? How would you like to see that happen?

JANE. I guess I’d like to be less passive, less the rag doll, and put some boundaries on her, tell her she has to act with more respect toward me, less punishing and negative. She’s just a bully. (She pauses and smiles). But I’d like to do that without being a bully back and acting just like her—without being my drill sergeant warrior. But I want respect. And I want her to know how angry I am at the way she treats me.

THERAPIST. That makes a lot of sense as a goal. What quadrant do you think that goal represents?

JANE: Well, it’s certainly not quadrant four, negative yielding. And, it’s not the negative assertive quadrant three. It’s this quadrant one, positive assertive. A forceful positive assertive, how’s that?

THERAPIST. Good. That’s an excellent goal, and there are some specific skills we can work on to help you share with your mother-in-law what your concerns and wishes are that are forceful and direct, but don’t involve acting like her, or invoking your drill sergeant warrior.

JANE. I'd like that. Do you really think it can work with someone like her?

THERAPIST. I'm glad you asked that. There are definitely skills and strategies that we can work on that will maximize your chance for success in reaching this goal. But as you well know, at some level we can't really control the other person, no matter how skillful we are in our approach. *One of the things we all have to learn is what is in our active control, and what is not in our active control.*

JANE. But then what would I do? Won't we just be back in the same situation?

THERAPIST. How else might you take care of yourself? What would positive yielding, quadrant two mean for you in the situation?

JANE. I know I can't keep feeling this stressed and angry. This is hurting me in my relationship with my husband, and at work, and I know it can't be good for my health. I want to have more inner peace and self-respect. I guess positive yielding quadrant two would mean doing nothing, just trying to calm myself and accept the situation. That would probably minimize hurt feelings in my mother-in-law if I didn't fight back. . Sort of like when I'm arguing a case in court. I can't control the judge, I try not to upset her or step on any of her little foibles, but in the end she has the power and I have to accept the ruling. (Pause, and with an annoyed look).

THERAPIST What's going on? What are you feeling?

JANE I hate to think of my mother-in-law as a judge. That makes me start to feel really passive and helpless—this quadrant four—again. I don't want to be afraid to act. Given my history of people-pleasing, and always being a good girl just to get along, it's hard for me to even imagine a yielding quadrant that isn't quadrant four. I'm probably hypersensitive about acting in ways that seem too passive.

Although Jane realized that the negative modes were not helping her, she also realized that her primary goal—changing her mother-in-law-- though understandable, and even laudable, may not be completely achievable. But she also felt that to work toward changing herself to be more accepting of the current situation—to just not engage, to only work on staying calm--felt too passive—a quadrant four, not a quadrant two response.

Please note in your dyads any ambivalence you might notice in the positing of your goals. Does any of that, as in the case of Jane [see above], relate to your own control stories and dynamics regarding the modes? These issues are further addressed in the next step of the Control Mode Dialogue, creating representations of the two positive modes.* Please work with

* At this point in an actual therapy session, some [therapists](#) may wish to spend more time exploring past control dynamics and stories as they relate to modes and agency, reviewing in more depth her SCI Control Profile, especially as it relates to modes and preferred style. The material presented here is a curtailed version of a therapy session used for illustrative purposes about how to use the Control Mode Dialogue.

your dyad partner (or your journal) to create representations of the positive assertive mode and the positive yielding mode for yourself.

E. CREATE REPRESENTATIONS FOR THE TWO POSITIVE MODES: EXPLORING INITIAL RESISTANCES AND PREFERRED MODE.

Jane described her positive assertive side as a judge in robes seated behind a high desk in a courtroom with a confident, amused smile. Her positive yielding side emerged as a puppy, playing with children, a little cocker spaniel that was warm, loving, and accepting of everyone.

THERAPIST: Having looked at these two positive modes, how would you like to deal with the situation with your mother-in-law?

JANE. As I've said, I know I don't want to keep doing what I've been doing, to shuttle between being the rag doll and the warrior sergeant. But I'm not sure which of the two positive ones I'd rather choose. Positive acceptance just seems like letting her get away with it, being a little puppy rather than a mature woman. With my mother-in-law, I just feel completely at a loss, like my hands are tied, and nothing I do ever works. It's hard to imagine being positive yielding without falling back into negative yielding.

On the other hand, when I think of trying to be a calm, forceful judge, it's hard for me to imagine a situation where I could stand up to her without it escalating into a shouting match. I don't think she would respect me as an authority figure, with the right to make requests of her. She would just accuse me of being tyrannical and overcontrolling. Then I'd feel guilty, like I'm pushing her away and causing her a lot of pain. So, I guess it's hard for me to imagine being positive assertive without it degenerating into a negative assertive encounter.

As we discussed in FAQ #3, Module One, Jane's situation is a common one. Often clients see Positive Yielding as being weak or wimpy, more limp, acquiescing rag doll than playful, kind puppy, and even fear that the puppy, for all its playful non-judgemental love, may be being taken advantage of. Likewise, they may feel they lack the skills to be positive assertive, the right to be so, or fear they will fail miserably if they try, or be castigated as overcontrolling if they succeed.

F. FURTHER EXPLORING RESISTANCES: DIALOGUES BETWEEN NEGATIVE YIELDING AND POSITIVE ASSERTIVE; NEGATIVE ASSERTIVE AND POSITIVE YIELDING

Next, the therapist helped Jane's negative modes dialogue with her positive modes in order to continue examining resistances to using the latter. He asked her how her warrior side would respond to the idea of acting in a positive yielding, puppy dog manner.

JANE: My jungle warrior self (negative assertive) is having a fit at the idea of my smiling and being calm, even playful (positive yielding) in response to my mother-in-law confronting me. I hear that side saying, "Don't be a wimp. You're no different than

that comatose rag doll in the hospital bed (negative yielding), and that's where you'll end up if you let that woman keep pushing you around and verbally beating you up and ordering you around. Can't you see I'm trying to protect you from being hurt?"

Likewise, Jane constructed a dialogue between the competent judge and the hospitalized rag doll

JANE: The rag doll says, "Are you kidding? You're not going to try to talk to your mother-in-law reasonably, are you? Sure, you have control in a courtroom, but she's not a defendant. She'll just escalate and you'll end up fighting and getting a verbal tongue lashing after which she will once again declare herself the winner and you a horrible person. How do you think I got here?"

THERAPIST: As we have discussed, it seems both the warrior and the rag doll want to help you and are still trying to protect you. Would you be willing to explore, once more, whether they would be willing to look for other ways to reach this same goal but without some of the negative consequences?

In your dyads, note what situations "cause" you to feel negative yielding or negative assertive. How do you feel when you act positive assertive and it doesn't work? Do you revert to negative yielding (helplessness) or negative assertiveness (attempting to overpower)? How do you feel when you act positive yielding and it doesn't work?

Please pay careful attention to the interactions between modes, including the dialogue of the negative modes and the tendency to alternate from one to the other: e.g., from "I feel passive helpless" (negative yielding) to "I'm not going to let myself be taken advantage of." (negative assertive). Notice when you seem to slip from positive yielding into negative assertive (to keep from feeling negative yielding): e.g., when we see ourselves as kind and giving, or "turn the other cheek" and forgive and accept, and feel the recipient isn't sufficiently appreciative, we may say, angrily "I'm not going to be a patsy" and find ourselves tightening and becoming "negative assertive."

Please discuss and stay attentive to any other mode interactions and dynamics and patterns that you notice in yourself.

G. MOVING TOWARD RECONCILIATION, APPRECIATION, AND SAYING GOOD BYE TO THE NEGATIVE MODES; EXPLORING THE POSITIVE MODES, ALONE AND INTEGRATED

During the ensuing dialogue, Jane's "judge" and "puppy" went on to thank her hospital-bound rag doll and her jungle warrior for their efforts to protect her. They realized that, despite their best intentions, Jane was still getting hurt, and so were her mother-in-law and husband. *Jane asked if the negative modes she'd relied on previously in dealing with her mother-in-law would be open to some alternatives, including what conditions would have to be present for them to try something new.* Jane's warrior and rag doll acknowledged that they felt appreciated and understood. The rag doll admitted she actually admired the judge's ability to stand up for herself, and the warrior confessed she was exhausted by all the fighting.

Having acknowledged and expressed appreciation for the intentions of the

negative modes, Jane was able to address how the two positive modes might be helpful in her situation.

In the Control Mode Dialogue, the final step is looking for ways to explore how the two positive modes might be utilized together. <If this exercise is being done in a class, this would be the final step to explore in the as part of your dyad>.

The therapist had Jane create a dialogue scene between her two positive modes, the judge and the puppy. In one of the scenarios, the judge was feeling quite exasperated and hassled, not only by the load of work before her, but also by the vicious adversarial comments of the opposing attorneys, and the disrespectfulness of the defendant. Just then the puppy came into the courtroom. The judge immediately smiled, lightened up, became calmer, and noticed she was able to listen more compassionately and carefully to the case before her (without getting so hooked by the negative emotions). The puppy in turn had no fear of the judge, and treated her with good humor and affection.

From this interaction of the two positive modes, Jane realized that she had two goals in addressing the issue with her mother-in-law. First, from a positive assertive standpoint—and the judge’s wisdom, authority, and fearlessness--, she wanted to ask to be treated with respect, and to share her concerns in a calm, clear, unintimidated way (but without resorting to negative assertive screaming or yelling).

Secondly, from a positive yielding standpoint—and the puppy’s wisdom--she wanted to bring compassion (for her mother-in-law’s hurt and pain), as well as lightness, even humor to the conversation, not taking her mother-in-law’s antics so seriously. She wanted to minimize unnecessary pain to her mother-in-law, and to reduce “entangling engagements.” Further, still from a context of positive yielding, she wanted to recognize that no matter how well—calmly, kindly—she stated her concerns, she couldn’t control how her mother-in-law would react. The therapist pointed out that sometimes no matter how well you present a concern to another, or draw a boundary, or make a request, there is no guarantee the other person will not respond defensively, hostilely, and angrily, and launch a counter attack. If the mother-in-law reacted poorly, Jane wanted to be able to honor herself for acting in a respectful way while at the same time being assertive (and not a rag doll). And she wanted from a compassionate place to be able to thank her mother-in-law for listening as best she could, and to appreciate whatever increased kindness and respect the mother-in-law was able to offer. She also realized that part of her goal might be to learn how to not take personally and “shrug off” any negative statements of the mother-in-law and to stay calm, centered, even forgiving during the process. Jane felt that this goal gave her the best opportunity to develop “the best possible” relationship with her mother-in-law, while still keeping her own self-respect and inner dignity.

SUMMARY REMARKS ON THE MODE DIALOGUE. Jung suggested that an important part of psychological growth involves acknowledging, non-defensively taking responsibility for, and to a certain extent accepting and integrating the shadow side of one’s personality. The Control Mode Dialogue helps us delve deeper into our control stories, including our views of the “negative” modes. It’s very hard to set a goal to learn and grow if we don’t acknowledge “who we are” including parts of our self that we may consider less desirable.

As you have seen in the case of Jane, this dialogue and exploration can be useful in helping you and clients to realize that, at some level, each of the modes serves a function, even the negative ones. This may seem counterintuitive initially, but, after reviewing the above case, as well as experientially going through this exercise yourself, you now have a clearer

understanding of what this means. Understanding why we are reacting relying on negative modes can help us be more willing to focus with less ambivalence and more certainty on choosing a goal, and to see how each of the two positive modes may be components of that goal . *

The Control Mode Dialogue can help us recognize and move through resistances to utilizing the positive modes, as well as to help clarify any confusion that may occur in mistaking negative assertive for positive assertive, and negative yielding for positive yielding based on prior control stories. Thus, rather than simply reacting automatically, the hope is that by going through this process, in the end, with each mode understood and validated, each of us can feel an internal healing and then more freely choose the best positive mode(s) as a component of our goal in a given situation. Once such a goal is selected, the stage is set for developing positive assertive and positive yielding mode interventions (Module Three)—wiser and more effective means for gaining and maintaining a sense of control.

* The Control Mode Dialogue can be used to explore and clarify the relationship of the modes to the goal, as in the above illustration. It can also be used as a stand alone exercise to further deepen and explore our control stories and dynamics. Some therapists and clients may find the use of “representations” helpful to achieve these objectives. However, the “representations should be understood as only one “means” to facilitate this process and achieve those objectives.