

LIVE •
LIXEMIND

PRESENTS

The Art and Science of Control

SHAUNA SHAPIRO, PHD

Preparing The Mind For Learning

Control

con·trol / kən'trōl / VERB

to exercise restraining or
directing influence over

to regulate.

to have power over

How many of you want to have
more control in your life?

How many of you often feel
your life is out of control?

The research

A healthy sense of control (both perceived and actual):

- Increases mental health
- Decreases stress and cortisol
- Decreases depression
- Decreases anxiety
- Strengthens the immune system
- Improves sleep
- Increases resilience



What is a Healthy Sense of Control?

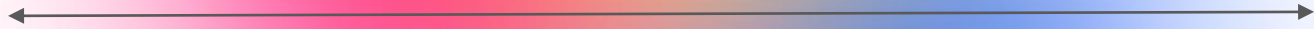
Popular (mis)conceptions

- We're frequently embarrassed to acknowledge our desire for control (e.g., we don't want to be thought of as controlling or manipulative)
 - We often believe that letting go of control is bad – that we should always be in control.
 - We often fear having control and the responsibility, choice and accountability that come with it.
-



Limited Western Understanding
of Control

A continuum



Active control

Lack of control

Assumptions

1. Control is good and “the more the better”
 2. Lack of control is bad/unhealthy
-

But what about the **negative consequences** of exercising too much control?

And what about the **positive dimensions** of letting go and accepting when we don't have control?

Paradox of Control

Healthy control includes both
active/assertive and accepting/yielding.

The 4 modes of control

Deane H. Shapiro, PHD

01

Quadrant 1

Positive Assertive

Active mode of control – focus on changing oneself and / or the environment (clear and decisive)

02

Quadrant 2

Positive Yielding

Sense of control comes from accepting things as they are, letting go of active control efforts (patient, trusting, accepting)

03

Quadrant 3

Negative Assertive

Too much active control (particularly in situations that cannot be changed or controlled) overcontrolling, manipulating, dogmatic

04

Quadrant 4

Negative Yielding

Too little control, feelings of helplessness, passivity
Being timid, indecisive, manipulated

Overweight

01

Quadrant 1

Positive Assertive

Make dietary changes,
begin exercise program

02

Quadrant 2

Positive Yielding

Practice body acceptance (e.g.
my worth is not dependent on
appearance)

03

Quadrant 3

Negative Assertive

Develop an eating disorder
(becoming overly controlling)

04

Quadrant 4

Negative Yielding

Feel helpless to and therefore
give up, and make no changes
to improve health

Control Practice

Intention:

May I develop a healthy sense of control

Attention:

Bring attention to a specific situation in your life that currently feels out of control

Attitude:

Bring an attitude of curiosity and kindness

Write down a response for each of the 4 modes of control.

01

Quadrant 1
Positive Assertive

Mastery

02

Quadrant 2
Positive Yielding

Acceptance

03

Quadrant 3
Negative Assertive

Arrogance

04

Quadrant 4
Negative Yielding

Ignorance

02

Quadrant 2
Positive Yielding

Acceptance

The development of greater **acceptance** of and capacity to tolerate challenging experiences, in contrast to **controlling** or changing thoughts, emotions or situations.

“The curious paradox is that
when I accept myself just as I
am, then I can change.”

- Carl Rogers

What is acceptance?

“ Radical acceptance is radical truth. In other words, acceptance is experiencing something without the haze of what one wants and does not want it to be. It is the unrivaled entering into reality as it exists. ”

- Marsha Linehan, PHD

+ +

“ For after all, the best thing
one can do when it's raining is
to let it rain. ”

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

+ +



“Is acceptance the same as
being passive?”

+

+

Acceptance \neq Passivity

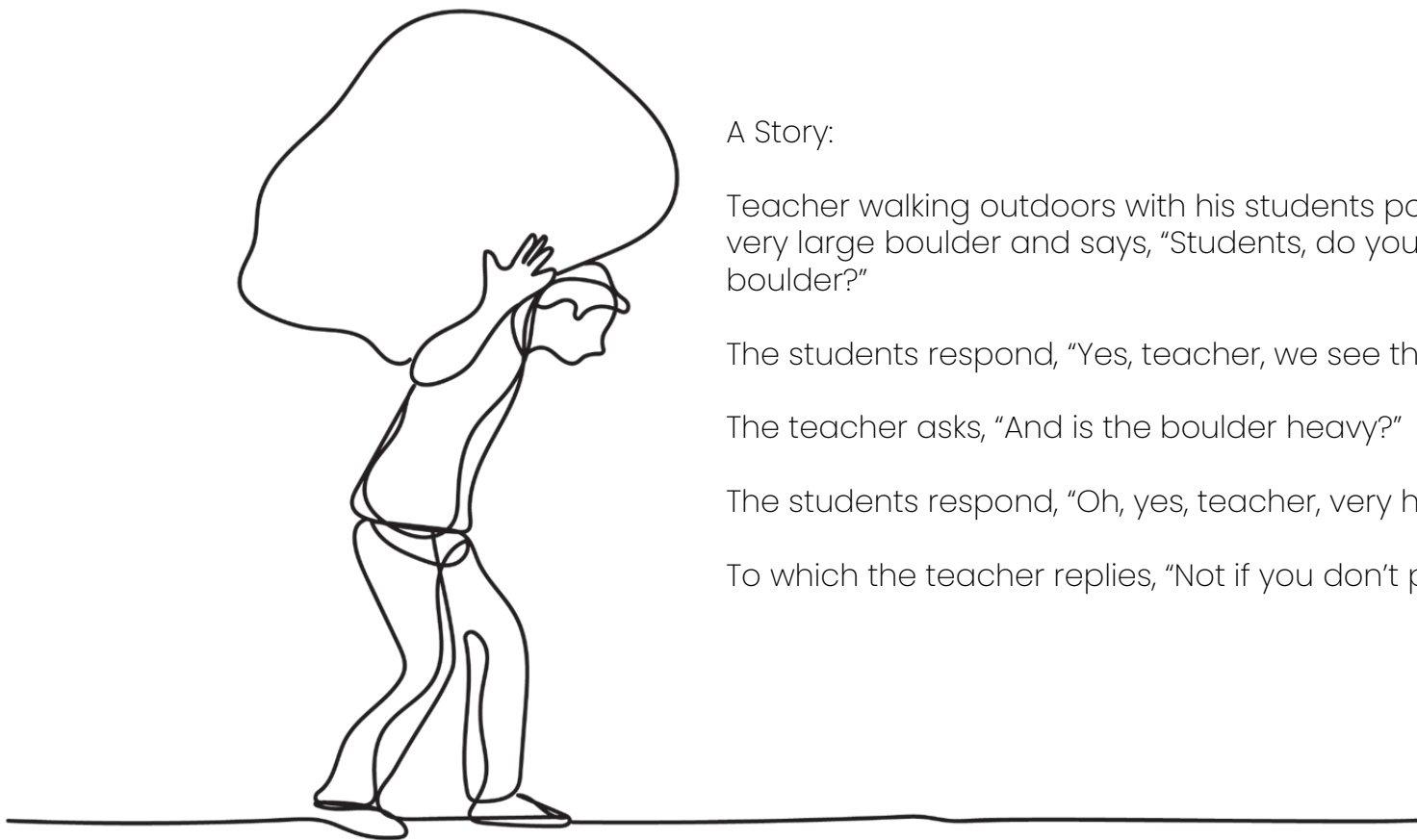
Acceptance = Freedom

A moment of radical acceptance is
a moment of genuine freedom

-Tara Brach

+

+



A Story:

Teacher walking outdoors with his students points to a very large boulder and says, "Students, do you see that boulder?"

The students respond, "Yes, teacher, we see the boulder."

The teacher asks, "And is the boulder heavy?"

The students respond, "Oh, yes, teacher, very heavy."

To which the teacher replies, "Not if you don't pick it up."



We inevitably encounter “boulders” throughout life. Whether they crash without warning or whether we knew, deep down, there was a rockslide waiting to happen—we have two options: we resist them, or we accept them.

Our resistance to pain compounds and increases our suffering. Mindfulness teaches us how to accept the boulders of life.



$$S = P \times R$$

Suffering = Pain x Resistance

From a mathematical perspective, the result of any number multiplied by 0 is 0. Thus, if we have zero resistance to our pain, we have zero suffering. This doesn't mean that we don't still experience pain. It means *we have control over how much we suffer.*

“ Acceptance is not
resignation. It is an opening to
possibility. ”

- Frank Ostaseski, founder of Zen Hospice

Practice

Intention: To cultivate the power of acceptance.

Attention: Bring to mind a challenge where it could help to practice less resistance and greater acceptance.

Attitude: Kindness and curiosity.

How does your resistance manifest? Does it show up as bursts of anger; self-defeating behavior; avoidance; physical symptoms such as sleeping too much or too little, eating too much or too little; or maybe by trying to control or force things?

With an attitude of kindness and curiosity, ask yourself:

How is my resistance causing greater suffering to me and/or to others?

When ready, gently direct your attention to what it would feel like to practice greater acceptance of what is happening—not because you want it to be happening, but because it is already happening. Since it is already happening, what might be the best way to deal with it?

Control Summary



Key Takeaways

GOLD NUGGET

Dyadic Exercise

- In pairs, discuss a challenging event from your recent past.
 - Determine what quadrant you used to deal with it.
 - Talk about how you could have used the other three quadrants and what the outcomes would have been.
-