

## TRAINING MODULE THREE

# INTERVENTIONS

### *How To Get There*

**Overview Module Three.** Module three is the longest of the four modules, and is therefore divided into three sub-modules.

**3.1 The use of the five steps to gain a positive yielding/accepting mode**  
**The use of the five steps to gain a positive assertive/change mode**

**3.2 What happens when success is not achieved?**  
**Exploring Integrative Mode Techniques.**  
**Applying the Principles of Control Therapy**

**3.3 Deepening exploration of building blocks and domains**

## MODULE 3.1: THE FIVE STEPS FOR THE MODES

### ***KNOW THE...***

#### ***FIVE STEPS FOR ACHIEVING THE***

- ***YIELDING/ACCEPTING MODE OF CONTROL***
- ***ASSERTIVE/CHANGE MODE OF CONTROL***

**Overview, Module 3.1.** We begin this module by reviewing material from Module 2, further exploring goals; giving a “quiz” about modes, agency, and control stories; and discussing the relationship of the breath cycle to the four modes and agency. We then turn to how Control Therapy attempts to match and tailor an individual’s control profile and goal to the mode of control interventions. We provide the “bottom half” of the hour glass—an overview of the topics involved in interventions. We then describe in practical detail the five steps for achieving the yielding/accepting mode of control; followed by the five steps for achieving the assertive/change mode of control. At each step we explore the issue of “matching” strategy to goal to profile.

**MODULE 3.1: INTERVENTIONS: FIVE STEPS FOR THE MODES  
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- Select interventions matched to your Control Profile and goal.
- Review and Update your self-management contract.
- Begin practicing intervention(s); continue monitoring.
- Continue listening to control speech, exploring control stories/dynamics

### **3.1.1 INTRODUCTORY SHARING TO BEGIN MODULE/CLASS**

In the first module, we explored *Assessment: where a person is*; in the second module we discussed *Goal Setting: where a person wants to be*. In this module, we examine *Interventions: how to reach the goals*.

#### **REVIEW QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION FROM MODULE TWO**

Before turning to specific interventions themselves, this is a good time to explore any questions or insights that arose as a result of the homework from Module Two:

- Are there any questions or comments about the process of determining a goal for your self-management project?
- Are there thoughts you would like to share about how Control Therapy might fit or not into your own forming (or formed) theoretical orientation?
- Did you notice any applications about how the different dimensions of self-control (the Odysseus story) applied to you? (From Figure 2.3)
- Any further explorations of your view of the nature of the universe, your place in it, and the role of personal control and agency that you would like to share?

Please keep these questions in mind as we proceed through the introductory sharing below, and discuss additional material about goal setting; as well as the nature of our control stories, including the question, “Who or what controls your life?”

**SHOW AND TELL.** The beginning of this class/ module is once again an opportunity to share an illustrative story from the past week, and how it applies to control.

A “classic” control battle and power struggle that can occur in interpersonal relationships is how affection is given and received. Remember the example of interpersonal goals set in module two: the partner wanted to influence” the other to increase signs of affection?

*One way to understand how “giving and receiving affection” can go wrong is a cartoon of a person looking at the Venus de Milo (the famous armless sculpture of a woman’s torso). As he stands before the beautiful figure, he says, “The one thing I really want from you is a hug.”*

**GOALS RE- REVISITED.** As a metaphor, the Venus de Milo “joke” seems to capture a frustrating control battle in a relationship. One person may seem overcontrolling and asking the impossible, the other may feel helpless and passive in meeting the partner’s needs. Clearly, when we set a goal, such as asking increased affection from our partner, we have to make sure that what we’re asking is something they are willing (or even can) offer. Otherwise our request is not positive assertive, but negative assertive and overcontrolling.

We may find in this situation that there are two goals, and subsequent interventions. One may be directed *toward ourselves*, in that we need to learn to accept in a positive yielding way the limits and abilities of our partner to meet our desire in the specific way we wish. The other goal and intervention may be a dialogue and discussion about ways and with what frequency and to what extent each partner feels comfortable giving and receiving affection.

If the metagoal is the sharing of increased affection, clear communication is necessary to make sure that each understands “precisely” what that means to the other person. For example, one person’s way of expressing affection may not be another’s: e.g., one person may feel valued by receiving non-verbal hugs; another may like verbal statements of affection. Yet another may like verbal statements of “global unconditional love” e.g., “You are an amazing and wonderful person”; whereas someone else may want to be praised for specific competences and attributes: e.g., “You are so kind to give to that charitable cause.” One may appreciate cards or presents (no matter how inexpensive) as a sign of affection; another may want only “hang out” time; still another may appreciate actually being taken care of (eg. being cooked a special meal). These examples illustrate the importance of specificity and clarity in goal selection, within the context of a broader “metagoal.”

Take a look once more at the goal you have set for yourself in your project. Is your goal about how you want others to act or about the changes you want to make in yourself? Is your goal realistic, or are you asking something that the other person (or yourself) is incapable (or unwilling) to give? Asking these questions of yourself (and your client) before beginning the intervention phase is crucial so that, as in the case of the Venus de Milo “joke” we don’t spend time trying to intervene to achieve something that is not attainable. Sometimes our goal (e.g., getting the Venus de Milo to hug us), is a misplaced goal. Rather than give us the sense of control we desire, our assertive efforts for external change in order to reach this goal, no matter how skillful, will only make us feel more helpless, frustrated, and out of control.

Thus, an important question to ask in framing and selecting our intervention (the focus of this module) is how we can best achieve our goal of attaining a positive sense of control. For example, is the best approach to change the external environment (e.g., the other person), or to change your self to become more appreciative of what the other person can give, more accepting of the other’s limitations, or to decide that this is not the right person for you? Is your goal best achieved through the assertive or the yielding mode, or some combination of the two?

To answer this question and formulate your goal (and the subsequent interventions) it is important to know your own control profile, your control story (including any conscious or subconscious biases toward different modes). You may wish to look in your journal at the exercises you have done in Modules One and Two regarding your views and control stories regarding the two positive modes, and any preferences you may have. You may also wish to look at the domain specific section of the SCI, and notice for those areas that were a concern, how you wished to address them: i.e., change or acceptance. Finally,

you may want to review the worksheets from Appendix 3 that you completed as part of the homework from Module Two regarding choosing a mode goal: Appendix 3.6--Questions to Facilitate Discussion of Mode Control Stories., Appendix 3.8—Control Mode Dialogue; and Appendix 3.9--Decision-making Process: Prioritizing Domains and Choosing Modes.

**WHO OR WHAT CONTROLS YOUR LIFE: AGENCY** (Round 4). Using the content analysis handout forms from Training Module Two (Figures 2.4 and 2.5), what nuances and clarifications did you discover this week about “who or what controls your life?” Did you find it was more complex and nuanced than your initial control story?

“*Others.*” In the “other” category, did you notice a number of different times when it seemed as though “others” exerted some influence on your life? Who or what were these others? Which were positive influences that helped you gain a positive sense of control? Which “caused” you to feel less in control? For example, was it “others” who “caused” you to get angry, stressed, or fearful? When a person says “They made me angry” they are in effect “blaming” the other person for “causing” their bad feelings. Although from one perspective that makes sense, from another perspective, the question can at least be asked: “Who is responsible for our feelings? Do we have any personal responsibility in terms of how we react to what has been said?”

“*Self.*” What did you learn when you felt “self” was the agent of control? Was it more complicated than you initially thought? Who is this “global” self as agent? Was it sometimes your thoughts that controlled your feelings? Your feelings that controlled your thoughts? Your body that was calm and wise (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing) and helped settle your thoughts and still your labile feelings? When you were angry, or stressed, or fearful, how much of it was “caused” by others (as asked above) and how much did you “allow” yourself to get angry (stressed, fearful).

It is worthwhile to spend some time discussing these issues, as they will be an essential part of this module’s intervention approach.

**QUIZ: CONTROL STORIES, MODES, AND AGENCY.** You have now spent a couple of weeks looking at speech patterns, control stories, modes and agency. It’s time for a pop quiz to test your competence.

Let’s start with a simple question. Which mode of control could the following “teaching story” be used to illustrate?

# In India, there is a story about how to catch a monkey. One places a banana inside a vase that is smaller at the neck and wider at the bottom. The hole at the top of the vase is large enough for the monkey’s hand to reach in and grasp the banana. However, the fist around the banana is too large to get out of the vase. The only way to get free is to let go of the banana. Active control will only keep the monkey trapped (CT, p. 195)\*.

# Ok, now a little more difficult question. Is the following client’s statement positive yielding or negative yielding?

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\* Q2, positive yielding

“I don’t want so much active control in my life.”

Is this an abnegation of responsibility, or a positive letting go? How much depends on the external context? How much on whether the level of desire is satisfying or not for the person? What are some follow-up questions you would want to ask to help your decision?

# How about the statement, “Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good.” What modes might be involved here?

In this quotation, the perfect is presented as too high an expectation, involving an excessive (and inappropriate) amount of effort (quadrant three, overcontrol). The “good” involves learning to do the best you can (positive assertive) while tempering that with positive yielding and acceptance.

#Now let’s look at a series of statements that might come from an adult client you are seeing whose parents divorced when he was thirteen. The parents’ divorce is a fact. What is interesting is the control story the client tells. Notice the different control stories represented in the statements below. Discuss which mode the statements represent (q1 to q4), who is the primary agent, and (if known [?]) what is the object of control. If you were the therapist, what follow up questions might you ask?

*“I caused them to break up (divorced parents). I still have a lot of control over others and don’t know how to use it in a way that doesn’t cause bad things to happen. I feel trapped: I am responsible, yet am powerless to keep bad things from happening...”*

Who or what is the agent in this statement? What are the modes of control expressed?

From this statement it sounds as though the client is afraid that he has too much control (quadrant three) and yet also feels powerless and helpless (quadrant four) to effect positive outcomes. He feels he was the agent of control in terms of his parents’ divorce, but it’s a misplaced and excessive belief in his responsibility for their actions.

*“The world is not a safe place. Those who are supposed to protect me just abandon me. There is no one I can trust to help me gain control. I can never trust anyone...”*

In this sentence, it appears that the “agent” is the outside world. The client is the agent when choosing whether/whom to trust, but since the world provides no one the client can consider trustworthy, he feels very passive and helpless (quadrant four).

*“Unless I do everything myself, things will fall apart around me. I need to rely on myself, for no one will be there for me. People I love will always leave, so to be in control I need to keep myself from getting close to others, always on guard, or I will be harmed. The more control I have, the less vulnerable I will be. It’s all up to me, for the world is capricious.”*

This statement indicates the self as agent, and the mode is both positive assertive (q1) and negative assertive (q3). Note the effect this control story has on the client's desire for control, which is quite high. How do you decide when a person's actions, behavior, and thoughts move from positive assertive to negative assertive? Do you see a potential connection between negative assertive and negative yielding? For example, someone who feels high in negative yielding may see herself as a victim. To compensate, this person might become overly rigid, fearful of being taken advantage of, lash out at others for trying to take unfair advantage of them, and in fact act in a negative assertive way, all the while still feeling helpless and a victim.

As you can see from the above, control stories can influence our view of all aspects of our control profile: agency, mode, desire, and sense of control.

Our quiz ends here.

We now pause to “take a breath” as a way to help anchor what we’ve just discussed.

**BREATH CYCLE AND THE MODES.** Since this is a section on interventions, and breath is an important one, let's begin with using the breath cycle as a learning device for understanding experientially the different modes of control.

**POSITIVE ASSERTIVE.** Take a conscious in-breath. You are in control of that breath. As we mature, we no longer need to be passive, helpless victims of fate. The in-breath can symbolize the positive assertive mode.

**NEGATIVE ASSERTIVE.** Now keep breathing in. More. Still more. If we continue to take in air in an active way, we find that no more will go in. We have reached the limit of assertiveness. What was positive becomes negative.

**POSITIVE YIELDING.** What needs to happen next in the breath cycle? We have to let go. Ahhhh. Breathing out (positive yielding) can be an antidote to negative assertive.

**NEGATIVE YIELDING.** If we continue to breathe out, we find that eventually what was positive and necessary becomes passive (even life threatening), i.e., negative yielding.

As a simple tool, our natural breath cycle (in-breath, pause, out-breath, pause) can be a reminder of the four modes.\*

### **RUMI SELF-OBSERVATION. EXTRA CREDIT DISCUSSION.**

As a playful way to end the show and tell section, and before moving on to the Intervention portion of this module, it may be enjoyable to take a few minutes to discuss whether anyone tried to operationalize and monitor the line from Rumi's poem “*be the soul of that place.*” Are there any thoughts, feelings, evaluations, or insights to share with the group? Did anyone try to practice Rumi's advice? Anyone succeed? ☺

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\* Regarding agency, notice that the language we have used presumes the “self” as agent during the breath cycle, and voluntary, “willful” breathing: e.g., “Take a conscious breath in.” But we also know that at night we breathe, even though we aren't “consciously” doing so. Who is the agent then? ☺



### **3.1.2 INTERVENTIONS: MATCHING CONTROL PROFILE AND GOAL TO MODE OF CONTROL INTERVENTIONS**

At this point in the self-management project, you have experientially become familiar with the Phase One aspect of Control Therapy: Assessment and Goal Setting. You have learned about the following:

#### **PHASE ONE OF CONTROL THERAPY: ASSESSMENT AND GOAL SETTING**

- **Assessment “Where the client is”.** In the first few sessions of therapy, based on the client’s control profile, the clinician learns, as you have seen for yourself, about the client’s overall sense of control, normal modes of control, agency, desire for control, and domain-specific areas of concern—the assaults to one’s sense of control.

You, serving as therapist and client in your self-management project, have learned to develop a control profile through the SCI, listen to control speech, self-monitor, and explore personal control stories. All of these activities are ways to increase self-awareness and self-exploration. As the saying goes, you can’t change your self until you know who your “self” is.

- **The Goal “Where the client wants to go”.** Based on the above information, a goal has been set, to accept or change what behavior (and/or cognitions) under what conditions, to what extent. As you have seen, the therapist (you, in this case) also learns from the Control Profile how the client (again, you!) wishes to address her areas of concern: i.e., assertive/change or accepting/yielding or a combination (for example, for body-- accept weight; change weight; accept that will never be an ectomorph, but pursue healthier weight; for relationship -- change relationship with mother-in-law; accept relationship with mother-in-law, accept that mother-in-law will never be best friend, but work to change/limit hostile interactions.)

Determining your goal, and the mode or modes involved in that goal is a critically important step. You are then ready to explore interventions for gaining a positive sense of control, and reaching that goal.

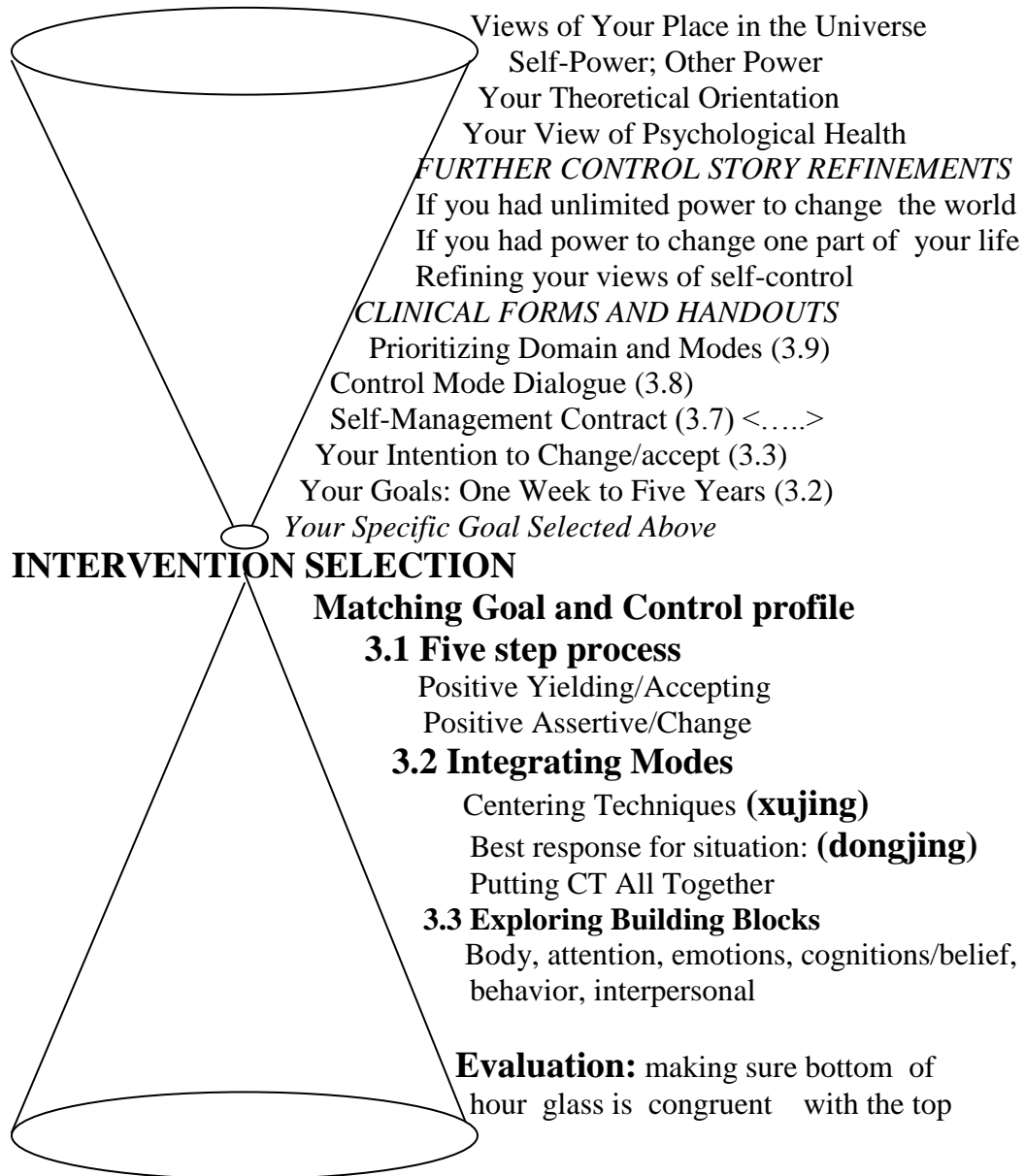
#### **PHASE TWO OF CONTROL THERAPY: INTERVENTIONS— “HOW TO GET THERE.”**

This training module involves the Second Phase of Control Therapy: intervention selection and implementation, with particular attention and emphasis on *matching* your control profile and goal to mode of control techniques. Once you have selected your goal, the next step is selecting techniques to match that goal. Interventions follow directly from the goal that has been set.

In this process, it is important to make sure that the goal you (or the client) select in the *narrow part of the hour glass*, (continuing the metaphor we began in Module Two), is congruent with your vision of yourself and your life from the *top of the hour*

glass. You also want to ensure that if you succeed in your intervention, who you become (*bottom of the hour glass*) is likewise congruent with the vision of yourself (from the top of the hour glass). Here is the complete process:

FIGURE 3.1.1  
THE HOUR GLASS: VISION, GOAL, INTERVENTION, AND OUTCOME



Module Three emphasizes how interventions in Control Therapy are selected and tailored for each client to help that individual gain a positive sense of control.

The simplest example of this is your self-management project. Once you have identified your goal (of assertive change, or of becoming more accepting, or some

combination of the two), you can then select therapeutic interventions that best address that goal. However, given the plethora of intervention techniques available, how can one select interventions that are most effective for a particular person with a particular clinical concern? In the self-management project, it is up to you as therapist to select individually tailored interventions that are the best match and then teach them to the client (you again!).

In terms of “*modes*,” sometimes the intervention chosen will involve the positive assertive mode, sometimes the positive accepting mode of control. Further, as we again saw at the end of Module Two, sometimes the modes can work in combination: a positive assertive mode can facilitate a positive yielding goal; and a positive yielding mode can facilitate a positive assertive goal.

In terms of *agency*, based on your control profile, what is the best way to structure the interventions you have selected: what proportion of your intervention approach optimally would come from self-efforts and/or what proportion from the efforts, support, and guidance of others?

In the remainder of Module 3.1, we go through the five steps of the yielding mode of control, and then the five steps for the assertive mode of control. We begin with this straightforward, non-combination, non-integrative approach to ensure that the basic foundation for achieving each mode is clearly spelled out. As noted in the introduction, in the additional submodules we address the integration of the modes and provide an overview of the principles and practice of Control Therapy in a specific situation (3.2), and then offer an opportunity for further self-exploration of the building blocks of interventions (3.3).

## **OVERVIEW: THE FIVE STEP PROCESS FOR USING THE ASSERTIVE/CHANGE AND THE YIELDING/ACCEPTING MODES OF CONTROL**

Below we present an overview of the guidelines and principles that highlight a five-step process for gaining control, either through a yielding/accepting mode, or through an assertive/change mode of control.

For clarity, we have broken the process down into a five step heuristic. However this is not meant to indicate that the steps are always discrete, linear, and non-overlapping. The first three steps have been addressed in Modules One and Two and involve aspects of assessment and goal-setting. At this point, you should have already picked a goal for your self-management project e.g., you’ve decided “weight” is a concern, and you’ve selected as a goal to “accept” your weight, or make efforts to “change” your weight. However, you will see that in discussing these first three steps in more depth before proceeding to Interventions, we provide a context that paves the way for the interventions to be most effective.

Clearly, it is beyond the scope of this manual to review every potential area of concern and every possible intervention for every clinical disorder in “cook-book” fashion. Our intention is that you take these principles and creatively apply them to the specific goal being addressed in your self-management project. Then, and as you work with clients using these guidelines and principles, you will have the opportunity to help them follow the same process to explore and tailor control-enhancing interventions that match their concerns, goals, and Control Profile (discussed in Module Four).

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## FIGURE 3.1.2

### THE FIVE STEP PROCESS OF GAINING CONTROL

ASSERTIVE/CHANGE MODE  
(if too low self-agency, high  
Quadrant 4, too little control or  
too low desire for control)

YIELDING ACCEPTING MODE  
(if too high self agency, high  
Quadrant 3, overcontrol or too  
high desire for control)

#### 1) **Desire for Control** (Burger, 1989)

(Addressing fear of loss of control; helping clients focus on  
choices, goals and awareness of options)

If too low, need to increase

Need to decrease if motivation is  
too high or inappropriately  
focused

#### 2. **Right and Responsibility** (Alberti & Emmons, 1974)

Increase right to change, to act  
assertively, and increase  
responsibility for ensuring  
that right

Decrease inappropriate  
responsibility and excessive  
belief in one's right to control

#### 3. **Belief in Ability** (Bandura, 1977, 1989; Selilgman, 1991, optimism)

Need to increase and ensure belief  
that one can make changes  
assertively

Need to increase and ensure  
belief that one can learn to let go  
and accept-address inappropriate  
belief in one's ability to actively control

#### 4. **Skill\* and Commitment**

(Developing strategies to implement goals)  
(Farber, 1966; Thompson, 1989; Averill, 1973; Lazarus, 1981)

Deal with obstacles to assertive  
change

Deal with obstacles to  
acceptance-address  
inappropriate or excessive efforts for active control

#### 5. **Success** (Skinner, 1953; Bandura, 1978).

Acknowledge sense of control from  
feelings of competence and mastery

Acknowledge sense of control  
from equanimity, acceptance

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\* Skills are required at each step. However, one can have desire, right, and belief, but not, for example, know how to speak assertively or how to relax. Therefore, we have created a separate step for skill—the specific clinical intervention(s).

To briefly review, this process begins when we realize that something is not how we wish it to be in our life—there is a concern or problem. Think about your own life, and your self-management project in particular: how do you identify when a situation or issue is a concern? Is it through listening to your own speech? Being aware of your feelings? How do you assess its extent and seriousness?

Once you've recognized a problem, it is then important to explore whether you feel you have the right to address this concern—is what you're asking for fair and appropriate? In addition, it is critical to assess whether you feel this concern is your responsibility to address (including to what extent it is within your control). This exploration will help you determine your goal: what you want to do about the concern in terms of having a desire for more (or less) control over specific problems in your life. The third step, covered in Module Two is an assessment of whether you believe you have the ability to achieve your goal, and how high is your intention to pursue your desired goal (Cf Appendix 3, forms 3.3 and 3.4). Finally, we get to the actual selection of interventions, which is the main focus of this module— skill and commitment. What are the limits of your skill and ability? What new skills might be helpful to learn as interventions? Once you've selected interventions, you can make a self-management contract (Appendix 3. 7), including exploring how will you maintain commitment when there are relapses and motivational lags? (From Chapter 11,CT, on dealing with resistances and related difficulties).

Finally, the fifth step, the bottom of the hour glass is how you define success-- what “sense of control” means to you—in each mode.

*According to Control Theory, each of us is seeking to gain or maintain a positive sense of control in our life. When there is a concern—something seems out of control, we fear losing control, or there is an area where we desire more control—there are two positive modes that can help us achieve that sense of control: either we act assertively to address the issue or we utilize a yielding, accepting mode. To do so, we use a combination of the fundamental building blocks at our disposal; mind, body, behavior, environment, others, based on an individual's control profile and goals*

We now turn to addressing the five steps for each of these modes in more detail, beginning with the yielding, accepting mode of control (3.1.3); followed by the assertive/change mode of control (3.1.4).

### ***3.1.3 FIVE STEPS FOR UTILIZING THE YIELDING, ACCEPTING MODE OF CONTROL***

#### **1. DESIRE TO LET GO, YIELD, AND ACCEPT**

If you are reading this section, it is because you (or at least a “part” of you) has decided that you have a desire for increasing your positive acceptance of “what is” and decreasing what you feel is a too high desire for active control. Let's explore the issue of motivation for letting go and yielding. Why are you choosing this goal? In what ways do you think it is in your best interest? Do you believe that your area of concern either is not amenable to active change, or that a yielding, accepting mode of control is more appropriate and in your best interest? Do the images and possibilities of “dropping the

bundle”, “learning to flow like the way of water”, allowing accumulated snow (and problems) to roll off you, releasing and letting go to “escape” from a “trap” of your own “grasping” appeal to you?

As we pointed out in Module Two, the yielding, accepting mode of control can be a goal in and of itself. You may realize you have come up against a situation in which the assertive/change mode of control is not possible, so that acceptance becomes both the wisest and the most practical strategy. You may decide that you want to use a positive yielding mode of control after having tried the assertive change mode and realizing that you have run up against limits in your ability to create change (either in yourself or another). After repeated and unsuccessful attempts at changing the “rock” in front of you or within you, you may come to realize that certain things are not changeable, and that anger, helplessness, frustration, self-pity, and feeling like a victim are not attitudes which are serving you well.

You may decide to choose the yielding mode of control when you feel you are placing too much reliance on instrumental doing and micromanaging. You may have a desire to exercise less active control in certain areas of your life, and to learn to be more peaceful and accepting. For example, you may feel that you have tried to diet and lose weight so many times that it would be better for you to learn to be more accepting of your body. You may feel that in your relationship you have trouble not being in active control, so you want to learn how to let go, accept, and trust more.

**Assessing Motivation.** How motivated are you to work towards healthy acceptance? To assess your motivation it can be helpful to address the following four questions

1. The most important reasons for your wanting to develop more acceptance in this area.
2. In what ways does this control issue negatively impact your life (i.e., what are the negative consequences if you do not become more accepting).
3. How motivated are you to gain increased acceptance in this area? Let’s imagine a four point scale with 4=*very much*, 3=*somewhat*, 2= *a little* and 1=*not at all*. (See also Intention to Change/accept, Appendix 3.3)
4. On the same scale, how motivated do you feel you are to learn and regularly practice self-control strategies for the yielding, accepting mode of control?

**Affirmations.** Below are some affirmations that may be helpful for maintaining and increasing desire for the yielding, accepting mode of control. Feel free to edit and adapt them to your own particular goal and area of concern:

- I want to learn to act and believe that I do not always need to be in active control.
- I want to learn to trust that things will be all right if I am not managing everything, and that the world will not fall apart if sometimes I let go of my active efforts and relax.
- I’m ready to learn that I don’t need to have a façade of always being strong and totally confident.

- I'm ready to learn to stop worrying so much about how I look or act in every situation.
- I want to learn to accept my limits, and to realize that I can do only so much before I need to pause.
- I want to learn to accept and love myself just as I am (general affirmation).
- I want to learn to accept and love my (specific affirmation: body part, height, weight, etc).

Now, look again at your questions about motivation and desire for learning this mode of control. If you feel you have appropriate and sufficient desire to learn, develop, and practice the yielding, accepting mode of control, and believe that the yielding and accepting that you are contemplating serves your personal goals, growth and higher self, then you are ready to go to Step Two, Right and Responsibility.

## **2. RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY.**

**Right.** Reflect once again on your chosen self-learning project. If you feel overloaded with too many responsibilities, ask yourself whether you feel you have a right to decrease your desire for active control, and to be more accepting of the situation or behavior that is of concern to you. For example, in your work situation, or with your children, do you have a right to some time and space where you let go of responsibilities? This is not to abnegate responsibilities, but to make space where you can find refuge from constant doing. In talking of Samurai warriors, Paul Reps wrote, "With a sip of tea, I stopped the war." Do you have a right to take time to step away from the "battle" to replenish yourself?

Affirmations might include:

- I have a right to think of myself and protect my time, including taking time to nurture myself, and "just be."
- I have a right to try to control my thoughts and feelings and reactions to events, to learn greater equanimity and acceptance.

If you are realizing that sometimes you have too high a belief in your "right" to get what you want (ie., a sense of entitlement) that doesn't serve you well, then you might want to work on "softening" your sense of "right." For example, you may wish to notice when you are feeling inappropriately "entitled" and shift your statements from "I have a 'right' to this," to

- I have preferences and desires, but can accept that I don't have a 'right' to necessarily receive everything I desire.

- I don't have a right to have every need of mine met. I can learn to increase my acceptance of situations where I don't have every need met when and how I want it.

**Responsibility.** To explore further, do you feel that perhaps sometimes your belief in your right and responsibility (and desire) to control things is so high that you deprive others of chances to practice doing things for themselves? For those of you who are parents, you continually deal with this issue as children learn to use the bathroom on their own, bathe on their own, dress themselves, and become more and more independent in other ways. Similarly some of you may feel in work and other situations that “everyone depends on me” and “things would fall apart if I didn't do all that I am doing.” Do you feel trapped by your responsibility, and yet aren't sure you have the right to turn some of your responsibility over to others?

Do you feel that you can do the job better than anyone else? Do you have the right, therefore, to not continue your “assertive doing?” Or is that irresponsible? These “doubts” have to be addressed to ensure that you can be clear and determined in choosing to continue to pursue the yielding mode of control.

Where does your right and responsibility to control end and the other person's right to choose for themselves begin? Where might it be helpful for you to learn to let go of things that you inappropriately consider your right and responsibility? Do you feel trapped by your responsibility in some areas, and aren't sure you have the right to turn over some of these responsibilities to others?

Do you have the right, even the responsibility, to at least consider developing greater yielding, accepting control in some areas of your life, such as work and family? In terms of specific interpersonal relationships, are there qualities in others that concern you, but rather than trying to change them, you feel the most helpful/realistic strategy is to become more accepting?

On a personal level, do you have a right to be more accepting of how you look? Of your weight? Your physical features? Who you are as a person? Your personal limits and boundaries? Who is responsible, if not you, for creating these feelings of acceptance within you?

**Exploring Childhood Messages.** It can be helpful to review what childhood messages you received about both “right” and “responsibility” in terms of yielding and acceptance. What messages did you receive about whether you were “good enough?” Was there a message of “more is needed?” That there was a problem with the way you were? “You'd be so much more attractive if you could just gain (or lose) a few pounds?”

Was it okay to take time to just “day-dream” and “be?” Did you hear messages that “winners never quit, quitters never win.” “Don't be complacent, don't rest on your laurels.” “When you're resting, someone else is getting ahead?”

Did you grow up in a family where you had to become an adult “too early” and were told that the “fate of the family” was in your hands? Did you grow up in a family where your wants and needs were met easily and often, so that you may now feel entitled? How do the messages, the “control stories” you learned about your rights, and your responsibilities, affect your current ability to learn a yielding, accepting mode of control? Notice that a control story that can be used appropriately for motivation during



the assertive mode of control “commitment” phase, can also be misused in a situation in which active control is not possible (ie., winners never quit).

Rather, what is needed is a “control story” like Lao-tzu’s Way of Harmony that counsels against pointless or inappropriate effort and teaches that you shouldn’t repeatedly bang your head against a wall (or a rock!). For all you end up with is a substantial headache! Positive yielding stories suggest the value of making a decision and taking responsibility to choose and commit to a yielding mode of control: it is time to recognize an unmovable force, and to find ways to let go, accept, and move on.

As you reflect on your responsibility regarding your area of concern, consider how much active control you actually have, or should have. Is this an area where you feel you have the right and responsibility to practice a more yielding, accepting mode of control?

**Affirmations.** If so, here are some affirmations that you may find helpful for Step Two (and before proceeding to Step Three, Belief in Ability)

- There is a time for action and doing, and a time for rest and being.
- I have a right, even a responsibility, to create times of safety where I can let go, relax, and just be.
- It’s okay for me to let go and not try to push beyond my limits.
- I realize that not everything in life is under my personal control. I am not responsible for changing or solving all the world’s problems.
- It is not being irresponsible to take time just for myself to relax and replenish, to not always try to improve and perfect myself and others.
- There are some situations where I have the responsibility to learn to let go and allow others the chance to grow and make their own decisions.
- I have a right, and even a responsibility, to learn to love and accept myself just as I am.

### **3. BELIEF IN ABILITY TO ACCEPT AND YIELD.**

**Assessing self-efficacy.** To what extent do you believe you have the skills, or can learn the skills, to develop the “serenity to accept” that which you cannot, or decide you do not wish to, change? These skills may include accepting some aspect of your external environment, a particular situation, or another person. It may also include accepting aspects of yourself. Look at your specific self-learning project, and jot down a few sentences about your belief that you can let go of active control, and develop a yielding, accepting mode. Review each sentence to see how confident you are in your ability. Is your language strong or tentative? Clear or equivocal? How much do you feel you will be able to control your thoughts, feelings, and behavior in order to utilize a healthy yielding, accepting mode of control. <For further self-exploration, take a few minutes to

review your answers to the worksheet entitled “Assessment of Self-Efficacy Beliefs” Appendix 3.4. >

As you reflect on your capabilities, ask yourself, “How strongly do I believe I will succeed in using a positive yielding/accepting mode of control in addressing my concern?” Take a moment to rate your confidence on the following 7-point scale:

- 1 – I know I will succeed.
- 2 – I am almost positive I will succeed
- 3 – I am pretty sure I will succeed
- 4 – I have some doubts about my ability to succeed, but probably will
- 5 – I don’t think I will succeed
- 6 – I’m almost positive I won’t succeed
- 7 – I know I won’t succeed

If you rated yourself as anything other than a “1”, take a few minutes to identify and explore any specific doubts that you can learn strategies of acceptance, as well as any fears t you think may hinder your progress, including how you might sabotage yourself.

***Enhancing self-efficacy.*** It can be helpful in enhancing self-efficacy beliefs to recall times in your life when you have been able to positively yield and accept, and have felt more serene and calm as a result. . Allow yourself to re-experience those feelings in mind and body. Also, reflect on small ways in which you already exercise a healthy accepting mode of control in your life on a daily basis throughout the day, even little things you don’t normally think about. For example, once you put a letter in the mail box, or send an email, do you just “let it go.” If so, remind yourself you do have that ability. Similarly, as we discussed at the start of this module, every time you breathe out can be an opportunity to focus on positive yielding, as you “let go” and allow air to exhale. Notice each day when you say good-bye to your loved ones when you depart from them. Note that each evening you allow yourself to let go of consciousness—let go of active control-- and drift into sleep.

Another way to build a “self-efficacy” muscle, is to actually practice in other small areas learning to let go and accept. Try to find ones that would be fairly easy for you, and give a success experience. For example, if you see a driver take a parking space you wanted, and you “move on” give yourself praise. When you reach a red light, try to calmly take a breath and be appreciative for a moment to “stop”. If someone makes a slightly irksome but inoffensive remark, and you decide not to engage, give yourself credit. You may notice that some of these things are occurring naturally, and you aren’t giving yourself sufficient reinforcement for them. Others may take a bit of practice, but when done successfully, can give an increased feeling of self-efficacy that may enhance your belief about your ability to succeed in your specific self-management project. Try noticing and doing these little acts of letting go consciously.

Visualizing success --seeing yourself acting in a calm and serene manner in various situations—can also be helpful. <A detailed elaboration of this technique—***Control Mode Rehearsal (CMR)*** is detailed in Step Four and Appendix 3.13>. Also, a knowledge of the research literature which shows that there are techniques (e.g.,

mindfulness meditation, diaphragmatic breathing) that, when practiced for six to eight weeks, have been shown to be effective in increasing acceptance, may also help increase self-efficacy beliefs. (The importance of the therapist creating a positive (and accurate) expectation for the client about a technique's efficacy is discussed further in (Module Four).

**Affirmations.** Below are some potential affirmations to strengthen and reinforce your belief that you can successfully adopt yielding, accepting strategies:

- I am willing to believe in and trust my ability to become more serene about those areas I cannot control, or believe that I should not try so hard to control
- I will notice all the areas of my life where I am already being successful in exercising the positive yielding, accepting mode of control. These areas give me the knowledge and strength to know that I can apply that mode to my current area of concern.
- I am learning to counter my self-defeating doubts and fears about my ability to succeed in becoming more accepting. My self worth is not based on “doing” alone.
- I believe that I can learn to yield and accept without feeling passive or as if I'm giving up, acting like a victim, or being unproductive.
- I can learn to be less influenced by other people's doubts about my ability to succeed, and trust my own decisions and abilities.

Notice once again what your score above was on the seven point self-efficacy scale. If it was less than four, were you able to increase it through the above affirmations, CMR, and knowledge that there are effective techniques that can be utilized? The main point of this step is that before moving on to learning actual intervention skills, it is important to believe that you have the ability to reach your goals, some positive belief about your chances for success and mastery (e.g., 4 or higher). If your score is lower than that, you may need to reconsider your goal, and perhaps be willing to identify a smaller, more achievable one that you have more confidence you can accomplish. Research has shown that the stronger your self-efficacy beliefs, the more likely you will succeed.

Once you have determined that you have the appropriate desire, right, responsibility, and self-efficacy beliefs, you are ready to consider the actual interventions, Step Four.

#### **4. SKILL AND COMMITMENT**

**Skills for the yielding/accepting mode: Building blocks.** No matter how much desire, right, and responsibility we may have to reach our goal of being more yielding

and accepting, it is also necessary to have the skills to implement that goal. We humans have certain potential building blocks at our disposal, what we might call the raw material, the alphabet that can be used to construct the skills of an intervention.

**These building blocks are body, attentional control (where and how you focus attention), decisional control (choices that you make), cognitions, images, emotions, behaviors (including speech and actions), other people (guidance, social support, and reinforcement/feedback), and our control stories, including beliefs about the nature of the universe.**

The Control Therapy approach draws from these building blocks, this alphabet, and puts them together into “words,” “phrases,” and “sentences” to create an intervention specifically designed for your control profile, area of concern, and goal. In this section, we are going to discuss skills that can be helpful in gaining a sense of control through the yielding, accepting mode of control.

As is obvious from the way we have formatted the manual using a self-management project as a way of learning, we believe that before one can teach a control-enhancing strategy, such as a self-regulation technique, to another it is important to have explored it oneself. Therefore, part of this session (and/or future homework) is devoted to practicing the techniques discussed. Clearly not every technique will be needed in your particular self-management project, but we present them here for you to explore because we feel that, as the therapist, you will feel more comfortable and be more knowledgeable having acquired first hand experience. Further, even if a certain technique is not directly related to your self-management project, it may be beneficial in a preventive way as part of your own self-exploration and growth.

In this section we present therapeutic interventions that use the above building blocks, tailored toward developing the yielding, accepting mode of control. The first two involve learning to accept what is in body and mind: *diaphragmatic breathing*, which involves learning to accept and trust your body’s natural wisdom (Appendix 3.11); *mindfulness meditation*, which teaches attentional focusing and the ability to accept all thoughts and feelings, without rushing toward them, or running away from them (Appendix 3.10).

The second two interventions involve cognitive and emotional self-regulation to cultivate the accepting mode: *cognitive self-regulation* involves self instructions and affirmations; *emotional self-regulation* involves cultivating emotions reflective of the accepting mode, such as serenity, gratitude, unconditional, non-judgmental love, and forgiveness.

We then put the four interventions together into the *Control Mode Rehearsal*, a visualization that uses imagery to practice the yielding, accepting mode (Appendix 3.13). Finally, we discuss the role of *other people* and our *control stories*, including belief systems about the nature of the universe, in developing the yielding, accepting mode of control.

**Diaphragmatic breathing.** Breath is a useful intervention because a) it is always with us; b) if we didn’t breathe, we wouldn’t be here in our body); c) it can be done voluntarily, and, as when we sleep, automatically. We have also discussed at the

start of this module how consciously practicing “letting go” of breath (the outbreath) helps teach two lessons. First, we learn that we (self as agent) *can* learn the skill of the positive yielding mode of control. Secondly, with practice, by allowing the breath to exhale on its own, removing the “self as doer” and trusting the body, we learn to deepen the practice of consciously allowing, yielding, accepting, and trusting.

Here we discuss in more detail the practice of a simple diaphragmatic breathing exercise. As we have noted, there are several ways we can breathe. One is where we actively try to control our breath. For example, draw a big breath in through your nose. Now exhale forcefully. That is an example of voluntary, intentional breathing. In this exercise, however, we are going to try to let the air come at its own pace—without any active control on your part. For example, your breath comes at its own rhythm during the night when you sleep. You don’t have to actively control it. Further, when we sleep at night, our body naturally breathes from the diaphragm. Therefore, *diaphragmatic breathing* is really something that our body already knows, and we are just trying to “learn” to do it well while we are awake: to learn to accept and allow our body’s natural wisdom.

Research has shown that when we breathe from our diaphragm (belly) our brain goes into a relaxed state (EEG alpha) and that when we breathe from our chest, our brain goes into a more excited state (EEG beta).

One of the easiest ways to practice diaphragmatic breathing is at night, just before you go to sleep. Lie down facing the ceiling, and place your hands, palm down, on your belly, with your two middle fingers just barely touching about an inch below your navel.

Now, *let* your body take a nice relaxed breath, allowing yourself to feel the air gently entering through your nose. Don’t try to draw it in. Just *allow* it to come in at its own pace. You will notice if you are breathing from your belly, your two middle fingers will move a small distance apart as your belly rises. It’s as if the stomach is gently inflating on its own.

Then, as you allow your breath to exhale at its own pace, your two index fingers will come back together and gently retouch each other.

There is no need to force your breath (e.g., puff your belly up). Just trust your body and your natural breathing style. Allow your breath to come in at its own rhythm, noticing your stomach gently rising, your fingers coming apart on the inbreath as the air enters your nose; then your fingers coming back together as your stomach gently sinks back toward the bed on the outbreath.

Notice whatever feelings you have of trying to control this breathing actively, versus letting it just be. Practice each night, taking three conscious breaths. You may notice that this exercise will help relax you into sleep!

As you become more comfortable with this way of breathing, you may want to practice it a few times during the day, as a way of “re-centering yourself.”

*Note how this technique, which is primarily focused on the body and breathing, also uses other building blocks: an “allowing” consciousness and attention (just watching) without trying to change anything--we breathe naturally whenever we’re asleep, so we’re just trying to keep consciousness from getting in the way!; imagery (let your belly be like a balloon being filled); and perhaps cognitive self-instructions: let the air breathe you, there is no need to draw it in, or force it in or out. Trust your body’s wisdom.*

**Mindfulness meditation.** One skill that research has shown to increase the positive yielding mode of control is meditation. The practice of mindfulness meditation\* (described briefly in Module Two as well as Appendix 3.10) involves learning to focus attention in a soft, non-judgmental way on whatever comes into awareness in the here and now. Note that this is quite different from behavioral self-observation (Module One), where you look for connections between the behavior, and its antecedents and consequences, as a way to then evaluate and set a goal. In mindfulness meditation, there is just noticing, without judgment. Mindfulness training would call the process of self-evaluation in Module Two “non-judgmental discrimination,” like the wisdom of a mirror. One notices skillful and unskillful behaviors. But, during the process of mindfulness, one just rests in awareness of what is, like a mirror, reflecting on passing thoughts, feelings, body sensations. A mirror reflects what is—can tell large from small, red from blue, skillful from unskillful—but accepts all, just noticing. The “goal” is a non-reactive awareness in which we neither run toward, nor run away from the contents, but just notice and allow what is to be there.

Through just observing, we can notice the impermanence of thoughts, emotions, physical discomforts—watching them unfold and pass through. Joseph Goldstein has called this the “*Big mind game*” in which we imagine our mind that is “vast like space, where experiences both pleasant and unpleasant can appear and disappear without conflict, struggle, or harm.” (--Majjhima Nikaya). Any feeling, thought, sensation, is merely a star that lights up in the sky. Sometimes we take the star for the sky, becoming caught in the drama of only one story, to the exclusion of everything else. Try to imagine your mind as vast empty space, and an issue that is of concern (an itch or pain in the body, a thought, a feeling) as one star in that sky. Just watch it light up with greater or lesser intensity. But while softly noticing, also notice all the other stars. Don’t get lost in any one star (story), just notice the sensation of star, neither running from it, nor approaching it.

Mindfulness meditation is a way to “generically” accept all that is happening in our lives, a way to just notice *what is* with bare awareness. Emotions or thoughts that arise in the field of awareness are just observed, including any tendencies to push away unwanted thoughts or feelings, or rush toward positive ones. The goal is not to change

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\*This meditation technique was developed within the Vipassana school of Buddhism. The technique, as described here, is extracted from its original philosophical context (see Module Two). However, for those who might feel uncomfortable with the term “meditation” or the context, an alternative version—the “mind scan” is described in Appendix 3.11

anything. Rather, the “goal” is to just allow whatever is arising to be there. If fear, sadness, or anger arises, and you notice a desire to run away from these states, mindful meditation teaches us just to continue our gentle breathing, while noticing the desire to flee, but without judging, seeking to maintain a compassionate, non-judgmental awareness of whatever thoughts and feeling may be present.

Thus, mindfulness meditation is a good example of a positive yielding/acceptance strategy because the practice enables us to develop greater capacity to simply be with or witness thoughts, feelings, sensations, and so on without the usual overlay of critical evaluation, interpretation and judgment that colors so much of our perceptions and experiences in life. In this way, mindfulness helps us to see ourselves and our circumstances as they actually are, rather than merely how we believe or hope that they should or should not be.

As long as we are denying our feelings or that there is a problem, or minimizing the situation, or projecting our fears and concerns externally, we are not recognizing, much less “accepting” the situation as it is. Through mindfulness meditation, we learn to see all aspects of ourselves, all the different emotions and feelings—anger, fear, compassion, helplessness, excitement. We can also learn to recognize the complexity of our motivations: selfish, egotistical, altruistic, selfless,—the many nuances and gradations of experience. Simply noticing “whatever is going on” in our mind, can be a useful strategy to settle and center ourselves, to notice what is swirling around in our minds, and to learn to accept all one’s thoughts and feelings with equanimity.

**Guidelines for practicing mindful breathing and sitting:**

- Make a special time and place for “non-doing.”
- Adopt an alert, yet relaxed body posture.
- Set an intention for your practice (and then let it go).
- Bring your attention to your body sitting.
- And then notice that you are breathing.
- Really experience the movement of the breath coming into the body and the breath flowing out of the body.
- Try not to control the breathing, but simply experience it.
- When your mind wanders, name what it wanders to and come back to the breath, using it as an anchor.
- Remember to bring a nonjudgmental, accepting and kind attention to whatever arises, moment by moment.

In the beginning, you may wish to set aside five minutes once or twice a day to practice “formal” mindfulness meditation, eventually working up to twenty minutes. If the first instructional period is done in class, take some time to “debrief” and discuss your experiences with a dyad partner. If at home, it can be helpful after the meditation to take a few minutes to write in your journal about your experiences.

Note that mindfulness meditation consists of several of the building blocks, including diaphragmatic body breathing; attentional focus (with a non-judgmental, open and kind attitude, that accepts and “bows” to whatever arises); intention (your conscious goal: a form of decisional control ; self-instructions (to remind yourself to stay non-judgmental,

allowing, keeping focus and intention); imagery (e.g., the big mind game: noticing the arising and disappearing of different sensations, feelings, thoughts, like stars in the night sky.

### **Cognitive self-regulation.**

*Dealing with negative thoughts*. What is a wise way to deal with negative thoughts that hinder acceptance?

**Notice only.** The yielding mode, in some forms of meditation, would say “notice the thoughts” without judgment (“ah, noticing negative thoughts,” “doubting mind,” etc.). Thoughts are viewed as “content” stories, and just “observed,” allowing whatever is to be. In watching the thoughts, one doesn’t “catastrophize” and embellish; one doesn’t minimize and dismiss, one doesn’t dwell on and ruminate about them. “Don’t run toward, don’t run away from the thoughts.” Again, just observe. And also, if you want to run away, and minimize, or start to embellish and create a story, just notice that, too. Just observing whatever is might be thought of as the ultimate “acceptance” of thoughts.\*

**Notice and let go.** Additional instructions in some schools can include “notice the thoughts” as if you were under a bridge and cars are passing over the bridge-- just notice the cars, *then let them go* (don’t get into the car and drive away with it) and return to breathing. This is a bit more “assertive” in terms of changing the “mind’s thoughts-- using thought (self-instructions) to work toward ceasing thoughts, and creating a more “open” mind.

There is a story of two monks who see a woman unable to cross a river. One monk picks her up and carries her to the other side. Then the two monks continue walking one way, and the woman another. An hour later, one monk says to the other, “How could you pick up a woman? You know monks don’t touch women.” The other monk replies, “I set her down an hour ago. Are you still carrying her?”

**Notice, let go, return to a competing response.** Whereas one school of meditation says notice, and another says notice and “let go” of negative or unproductive thoughts, still another approach involves practicing a competing response: e.g., a mantra, or series of sounds and phrases to utilize to stop negative thoughts and replace them with neutral/positive sounds and statements.

**Notice, Stop, “Dialogue”, Replace:** A cognitive-behavioral approach to dealing with negative thoughts involves four steps. The first is to notice the negative thoughts, and the second is to “stop them.” This can include using stimulus cues to remind oneself to check in on one’s thoughts, and “catch” and interrupt maladaptive ones, to more vigorous efforts, including, a loud covert or overt “STOP!”, and even the

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\* This “observing and noticing” can also be applied to stories, thoughts, and feelings. For example, one useful practice is to just observe mindfully the stories, thoughts, and feelings you have in each of the “negative” quadrants—e.g., negative assertive, negative yielding. Just observe from a quiet, centered place what those quadrants are like, without running toward them, or away from them. Are you able to just sit and observe “with curiosity” and get to know the stories, thoughts, and feelings in those quadrants?



behavioral use of a real “rubber band” to punish and reduce negative thoughts, and break into a cognitive sequence,\*\*

The third step is to explain (argue, convince, challenge, dialogue) with yourself about why those thoughts are negative and not helpful: e.g., I’m catastrophizing, overreacting, I’ve been through this over and over, and am just rehashing old news; this is not going anywhere, and it’s not worth going there. The final step in the sequences is to replace the negative unhelpful thoughts, with positive, less destructive thoughts, and ones which more accurately reflect how you’d like to think and feel. For example, on one side of an index card, you could write down a negative statement about your body and on the other side self-accepting statements to be used as substitutions.

What would be a self-sabotaging or negative thought related to your self-management project. What would your wiser, higher self respond to this thought? It’s been said that the one who controls the narrative wins. It is possible to anticipate your negative thoughts, and to plan how you intend to wisely address them.

**Control stories, affirmations.** In order to utilize the yielding, accepting mode of control with negative thoughts, and to replace them with positive ones, it may be important to examine any biases in our control story that may make this difficult—and whether the control story is problematic and needs to be changed and rewritten. Choosing a more positive yielding control story and/or affirmation\* may bring us face to face with our own biases that might make us feel we are acting weakly if we accept what is. This may come in part from our culture which suggests that we need to be strong, rugged individuals with a fighting spirit. We don’t want to be thought of as passive, weak, a door mat to be walked on, a victim, someone who “gives up.”

What are the control stories you may be fighting as you try to learn to be more accepting? Are you afraid that acceptance means you’re giving up on yourself: that your body “is what it is”; that your relationship is as good as it’s going to get; that your vision of yourself as better and more perfect may not happen?

Affirmations (and their related control stories) that support the yielding mode include:

- This too shall pass;
- It’s always darkest before the dawn (I can deal with this for now).\*\*
- There is a time for every season.
- He who has a why, has a will.

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\*\* As noted, meditative thought stopping can range from the gentle instructions to “notice and let go” to more vigorous efforts such as the Zen “Kwat” (an internal harsh image of a monk bowing and then using a board to the shoulder to interrupt thoughts..

\* An **affirmation** as we are using it here may be thought of as a *positive* “mini” control story—or “mini summary” of the essence of that story. As we have discussed, a **control story** can be positive (quadrants one and two) or negative (quadrants three and four). **Self-instructions** can, but do not necessarily overlap with affirmations (e.g., “take a breath” is self-instruction; “it’s all going to work out fine” can be both an affirmation and a form of self-instruction.

\*\* We have to be careful here of “pseudo” acceptance. In other words, we pretend we don’t really care, but secretly we’re “pretending” to let go to try to feel more in control. Sometimes, a kind of magical thinking is involved, so that if we claim it doesn’t matter, it might really happen and we’ll get what we want.

The control stories based on these affirmations involve learning to accept a situation in the now. However, part of that acceptance may be predicated on a belief in things changing for the better. Victor Frankl's assertion, "He who has a why, has a will," emerged from his belief in a happier future after the concentration camps which allowed him to accept (get through, tolerate, endure) where he was. Efforts to find meaning can help bring us to an understanding and acceptance of what is.

Accepting beliefs can also be facilitated by one's world view. For example, affirmations can incorporate a theistic view:

-- I trust in a higher power and that this makes sense. I accept what God gives. It is God's will.

-- Everything happens for reason; I choose to trust that this makes sense.

For those with a non-theistic view such as Taoism or Buddhism, they can still hold a belief and trust "in the way"; in the "isness" of things:

--You can't push the river.

--It is what it is.

--Trust the Tao (the way).

Saying (and coming to believe) these acceptance affirmations may not be easy. All of us eventually come to realize that there is uncertainty, impermanence, and a certain amount of necessary suffering and loss in life. We may not be perfectly happy with that, and that may not always be our first choice. But we also may come to realize in certain areas and situations that "what is, is" and decide we need to learn to live with and accept this.\* In some ways this can be a William James "as if" choice—choosing to develop an accepting control story and affirmation because we feel it is in our best interest. It make take practice, as developing any habit does—even cognitive ones—to choose to be more accepting. We have to overcome negative thoughts and beliefs such as "I'm not like that," "This is too hard," "This is so unfair."

In a situation where acceptance seems the only option, some might say, "I accept it. I have no choice. But I don't like it." Although there may be some truth in that statement, it may not be as nuanced, and not the whole truth. There are choices in *how* we accept. We can accept with courage and serenity; we can "tolerate"—a lower form of acceptance, more akin to resignation and fatalism; and perhaps the least helpful way we can accept is with bitterness and self-pity.

Through careful consideration of our thoughts and control stories, we gain more control of our thinking styles. We learn not be too hard on ourselves, too judgmental. Below are cognitive statements—affirmations, self-instructions-- that can be used to help us accept where and who we are. Skillful\* use of these can be helpful. As a generic affirmation, the following can be helpful to practice:

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\* This section is for those who have chosen as a goal to develop a yielding accepting mode of control. The comments here do not intend to imply that all suffering in life (e.g., social injustice, unnecessary suffering) should be addressed by this mode. Nor does it intend to imply that all individuals "should" utilize only this mode to address the necessary suffering in life.

\* \* We use the word "skillful" here because these strategies can involve downward comparison, as in the aphorism, "I felt sorry for myself because I had no shoes until I met someone who had no feet." Downward comparison can be helpful to develop gratefulness. Rather than always looking for what we're lacking, or

- I'm doing the best I can. There's nothing more to be done; I'm coping (solving) what's facing me as best I am able." (acceptance with gentleness toward self).
- "Rather than focusing on what is lacking or missing in my life, I choose to count my blessings, and find things I can be thankful for in my life as it is." (acceptance with gratitude)
- I will seek to focus on and appreciate those parts of my ....(body, life, relationships) that are working, and to develop conscious appreciation for what is.
- I can love and accept myself just as I am.

And, as continued practice in specific areas:

- I am working on learning to deal with specific situations that are out of my active control—e.g., : a busy signal, traffic, red lights, long lines)-- as an opportunity to pause and accept what I can't change with one or two degrees greater equanimity and serenity (rather than with aggravation, impatience, and helplessness).
- Every out breath I take, I am learning to practice consciously letting go, trusting, and accepting.
- I am increasingly able to be peaceful and accepting, and not rise to every trivial annoyance.

**Emotional self-regulation.** As you think of your self-management project, what emotions do you associate with the yielding, accepting mode of control? We discuss four here, as examples, but not meant to be inclusive. The first is "serenity," as in the "serenity to accept" and "letting go" of stress. The second is gratitude, learning to be accepting and appreciative of what is. A third is non-judgmental, unconditional love and loving kindness. The final one is forgiveness: coming to an acceptance and peace about something in the past that is not changeable.

***Serenity: Relaxation and Stress Management.*** Diaphragmatic breathing teaches us to listen to and accept the body's wisdom. Mindfulness meditation teaches us

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what others have that we don't, a useful strategy for cultivating gratefulness and acceptance for what we do have is to see, relatively speaking, how many blessings we have in comparison to those who are less fortunate. For example, in the first affirmation listed, a person could add: ... gratefulness for the blessings I have, *especially when I recognize the extent of poverty, homelessness, and suffering that others in the world are experiencing.* However, downward comparison can also be misused, as when a person tries to accept and feel better about their situation by putting others down through racism, sexism, ageism, etc. This is clearly not what is meant.

how to accept all thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Research has shown that both of these techniques can be helpful in creating relaxation and stress management. However, both are “generic” and don’t focus on specific areas of stress in the body. Two additional body-focused techniques that can be helpful are the body scan and progressive muscle relaxation.

**Body scan.** In the body scan (described in detail in Appendix 3.12), you begin with diaphragmatic breathing. Then you go through each area of the body, using attention and breath, as illustrated in the example below of the toes of your left foot (the technique can be directed to any area where you are feeling tension in your body):

Bring your attention or awareness to the toes of the left foot. Without moving or wiggling them, simply notice whatever sensations arise in that area of your body, being with the sensations without judging them. Now imagine that you are breathing into and out of this part of the body, as you continue to focus on whatever sensations may be arising there. If there is no distinct sensation present, simply attend to the absence of sensation. Go through several rounds of breathing into and out of this area.

It is natural for your attention to wander during this process. When it does, simply notice the distraction, and then gently bring your attention back to the part of the body you are focusing on, without judging yourself for having become temporarily distracted. When feelings arise (judgment, non-acceptance, gratefulness), just notice them and gently return to focusing on breathing into and out of the body part to which you are attending. You may be tempted to fall asleep during this process; try to remain awake and aware, in order to foster a sense of conscious, yet deep relaxation.

In addition to the practice of this formal body scan exercise, it can also be helpful to informally practice a quick body scan at different times throughout the day, to increase awareness of bodily cues and sensations during our daily lives (i.e., work, interactions with others, how our body feels and responds during times of stress, times when we feel a loss of control or when we feel we are trying to control and manage too much.)

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** A second body-focused technique often used for relaxation is progressive muscle relaxation. This variation of the body scan involves going through each muscle group, alternating tensing, then relaxing. Below we provide a representative example. You can apply this technique to all muscle groups, sequentially working through your entire body, or target specific areas as needed:

On an inbreath, tighten your right fist. Notice the tension. Keep tightening, and notice how you can make yourself tense, and where

you feel it. Now, on the exhale, relax your right hand, opening your fingers. Feel the difference. Notice what it is like for your fingers to feel at ease and with the excessive tension removed.

Notice that in these two techniques, even though the focus is the body, other “building blocks” are also involved. In progressive relaxation, there is a specific focus on teaching that we need to take responsibility for our stress, that we are the ones who can make ourselves anxious, and that we have the ability (self-efficacy) if we so choose (decisional control) to relax ourselves. This body-focused technique also involves attentional focusing and cognitions, as does the body scan, which also involves imagery. (Other specific imagery techniques, such as creating a relaxing positive setting, are discussed in more detail in the section on Control Mode Rehearsal, below).

***Gratitude: Acceptance and appreciation of what is.*** A second emotional state that you may wish to cultivate as part of the accepting mode of control is gratitude, appreciation and acceptance for what you have. The emotion of gratitude helps address feelings of frustration, helplessness, annoyance, envy, and other emotions about what you don’t have or feel is lacking in your life. The emotion of gratitude helps address feelings of frustration, helplessness, annoyance, envy, and other emotions about what you don’t have or feel is lacking in your life. Rachel Remen talks about those people “who are given more blessings than they receive.” Gratitude can be achieved through the conscious focus of attention on the positive aspects of your life, and by utilizing cognitions and affirmations such as the first one noted in the affirmations above:

Rather than focusing on what is lacking or missing in my life, I will recognize and be grateful for the blessings that I have.

***Non-judgmental, Unconditional love and loving-kindness.*** A third emotional state that may be part of your self-management project and the yielding, accepting mode of control is loving-kindness. This emotional quality can help address the desire to change, judge, or criticize. Loving-kindness can include the use of attentional focusing in a kind, loving way on a specific body part, on yourself as a whole, or on a beloved. It involves the feeling tone of caring and compassion.

***Forgiveness.*** Forgiveness is a form of acceptance that involves changing your attitude and feelings toward what happened in the past, to be more accepting of it. If your goal involves letting go of past hurts you feel were caused by another (or yourself), you may wish to offer forgiveness for pain that person (or you yourself) has caused you, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by thoughts, words, or deeds. As discussed in the Control Mode Rehearsal (below), you may visualize this process, feeling yourself letting go of unproductive anger and dwelling in the past about events that cannot be changed, and see and feel in your mind’s eye as you allow yourself to come to a greater inner peace and healing acceptance in the here and now.

**Control mode rehearsal (CMR)** is an extension of the Control Mode Dialogue (CMD) from Module Two. The Dialogue (CMD) was an opportunity to clarify your goals and modes. The CMR is an opportunity to practice, through visualization and self-

instruction, modeling the new skills you wish to develop in order to reach your goal—in this case a sense of control through the yielding and accepting mode of control.

CMR has two main steps: 1) imagining the problem scenario, noting any mental and physical cues and sensations; and then 2) imagining effectively handling the situation by using those cues as a “signal” to create and model through imagery the desired behavior, thoughts, and feelings you would like to see in yourself, visualizing yourself acting exactly as you would like, including feeling your body calm and relaxed, making cognitions that are supportive and helpful, and saying and doing whatever supports your goal of enhancing the yielding, accepting mode. Control Mode Rehearsal operates on the same principles sports psychologists use when helping athletes use self-hypnosis to effectively execute a play sequence, golf swing, or other highly controlled yet relaxed precision movement. The more clearly you can see the problem situation and a desired solution or solutions, the more likely you will be to successfully reach your goal.

If your goal involves accepting some problematic aspect of another person, you might want to see yourself in the CMR guided visualization being accepting and non-reactive when the person acts in the way that concerns you. If your goal involves letting go of past hurts you feel were caused by another, and you wish to offer forgiveness, you might want to use CMR as a way to visualize the practice of offering forgiveness to another for pain that person has caused you, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by their thoughts, words, or deeds. As you visualize this process, feel yourself letting go of unproductive anger and dwelling in the past about events that cannot be changed, and see and feel in your mind’s eye as you allow yourself to come to a greater inner peace and healing acceptance in the here and now.

If there is a specific aspect of yourself that concerns you—a limitation, something about your body—in your CMR send as much caring and love as you are able to that aspect of your self, greeting it with kindness. If you have made mistakes or caused suffering to yourself or another in the past, it is helpful to practice self-forgiveness in your CMR “for any hurts I’ve caused, intentionally or unintentionally, by my thoughts, words, or deeds.”

If your goal involves more holistic self-acceptance, you may wish to practice a CMR in which you cultivate images and make “self-statements” of self-acceptance and self-love for who you are, just as you are, without trying to accomplish, change, or actively control anything. Feel a deep caring about yourself, a willingness to nurture yourself, and to accept yourself at the most fundamental level, unconditionally, not dependent on what you perform, do, or accomplish.

### ***Guidelines for practicing CMR.***

**Creating a personalized script.** You may read the following guidelines to yourself, or get into pairs and take turns reading it to one another. What follows is a general format, because research suggests that it is more effective to create a personalized guided imagery scenario tailored to your concerns, style, and values,

than to use a preset one. When working with clients, you may want to have a detailed discussion of their problem scenario and desired behavior before doing a Control Mode Rehearsal, so they can generate material that resonates most powerfully for them. In other words, you can co-write a customized protocol using the client's own keywords and affirmations. In this case, since you are both the client and the therapist, please, as you go through steps three and four below, customize this to your particular concern and goal (perhaps using some of the language, or affirmations, mentioned above).

*Brief preparatory breathing.* Allow yourself to take a couple of deep breaths, exhale, and as you are willing, let your eyes gently shut.

**The scenario as it is.** *Using visualization to create the situation that is of concern, as it is.* Notice in your mind's eye a situation that is causing you some concern. Try to see the situation in as much detail as possible. Where are you? Who is present? What time of day is it? Describe the scene as precisely as you can (sights, sounds, sensations, tensions).

Notice where and how you are *breathing*. Is it somewhat shallow? In your chest?

Bring your attention to how you are *feeling* in this situation. Are you noticing any stress in your body? If so, please note where as clearly as you are able you are feeling any anxiety? Butterflies in the stomach? Tension in the neck? Sweaty palms? Are there other emotions? Fear? Anger? Again, notice where you are feeling these emotions in your body.

Note as precisely as you can what you are *saying* to yourself, what thoughts you are having.

When you envision the problem situation, you should try to make it as realistic as possible. This is important because it will help you recognize (in a safe environment) what feeling anxious, even slightly "out of control" is like for you. This is important so that, in the future, you can detect these feeling and thoughts early, and use them as a cue to break the negative sequence and transition to the next phase, below.

**The scenario as you would like it to be: The use of multiple building blocks.** This involves the transition to imagining how you want yourself and the situation to be. As with mindfulness meditation, note how this CMR technique can include and integrate many of the building blocks, all in the service of self-modeling the positive accepting mode of control: imagery and visualization; emotional reprogramming/ self-regulation; self-instructions (cognitions) to alter negative thought patterns and feelings, and kinesthetic (body and movement), using multiple building blocks.

*Diaphragmatic breathing.* Now, take a few slow, diaphragmatic breaths. Allow your breath to settle into its natural rhythm and let yourself practice the diaphragmatic breathing we have discussed.

*Mindfulness.* If you continue to feel anxiety or tension, allow these feelings to arise. Then, just notice them mindfully, while continuing your diaphragmatic breathing. You may also wish to direct your breath gently toward the areas of

discomfort, as in the body scan allowing a calm, gentle relaxation to flow through you.

**Visualizing positive self-modeling.** As you continue this mindful noticing and slow, gentle breathing, switch the scene in your mind so that you now see yourself thinking, feeling, and if appropriate, acting exactly as you would like to in the situation. If someone else is present in your CMR, see yourself saying or doing exactly what you want to do, if anything, toward that person. When you switch to the desired scenario, try to be as specific and detailed as possible. This helps you visualize what success would mean to you in concrete terms, thereby modeling it for yourself.

Remember to keep your breath as an anchor, inhaling effortlessly, exhaling gently and calmly.

**Positive thoughts.** Remember to create positive thoughts as part of your CMR ideal scenario. Are you telling yourself that you are proud for the courage you are showing in attempting to act in accordance with your self-chosen goals? Are you admiring your willingness to become more accepting in this area? You may use positive self-statements listed above as affirmations, may add ones like “This is a brave step I am taking,” “I am doing the best that I can,” “I am feeling loving and accepting of myself just as I am,” as well as create your own cognitions specific to your self-management project.

**Positive emotions.** Also try to cultivate and feel the positive emotions that you want to have in the CMR situation, using a combination of thoughts and images that are most helpful for you. For **serenity**, you may think about and see yourself “dropping the bundle” of cares; being in a place that brings you quiet relaxation (e.g, the ocean, watching a sunset, a favorite place in nature). For **gratitude**, you might think of all the blessings that you have right now. You can create your own positive scenarios for the healing power of **forgiveness** (to self and/or another), and of extending **loving kindness** to yourself, a part of your self, or to someone else.

As you continue your slow, gentle breathing, allow all the thoughts and feelings that contribute to peaceful acceptance and letting go to flow through and in you.

**Discussion.** Take time to write in your journal about the nature of your thoughts when you visualized the scenario “as it is” compared to “as you wanted it to be.” Notice how the second set of thoughts might serve as an antidote to the first. Further, once you become aware of them, the first set of thoughts can be a cue to “change the scene” to the ideal CMR and replace the thoughts themselves with the positive statements. Similarly, notice the differences in feelings and emotions between the two situations, and realize that you can use the negative emotions of the “as is” situation to become a cue triggering a new sequence: beginning to breathe diaphragmatically, notice mindfully, and cultivate the positive emotions of acceptance that you desire.

**Little help from “others”/ the Other in the yielding, accepting mode of control: skills and commitment.** Up to this point we have emphasized the role



of individual self-responsibility in developing the yielding, accepting mode of control—that it is primarily up to you to determine whether you have the desire, the right, and the responsibility to work toward that goal. However, sometimes, becoming more accepting involves enlisting others' help. In Module Two we discussed the story of Odysseus and the sirens, and that part of self-control (and a “self”-management project) is recognizing the limits of our own personal abilities. Odysseus realized that he alone through personal will couldn't overcome the sirens, and asked for help.

For some it can be beneficial to seek help and guidance from others with special knowledge and wisdom (e.g., a therapist, counselor, spiritual community), to learn specific skills and practices to increase your yielding accepting mode (e.g., for practicing forgiveness, increasing compassion for personal limits, grieving losses.) For others, family and friends can be a support system in enhancing your commitment by offering encouragement during tough times, and validating your belief that you can succeed. Think of your own control profile, in terms of self and other agency. How willing are you to accept others' help? Might there be ways you can enlist others' assistance in your area of concern?

Sometimes we are able to accept a situation or concern by “normalizing it” and realizing that we are not alone, that others share the same or similar problems: i.e., it's a universal issue we all face, not a personal problem you alone have because you've done something wrong. A feeling of shared suffering, of we're all in this together, taking refuge in your support community can also help create feelings of acceptance. Social support can be helpful in adapting to and accepting adversity through maintaining connection, and helping us to see and feel that we are not alone. To have someone who can calmly and empathically just listen and hear, and let us talk about our losses, to let us know that it is ok to feel how we are feeling, that it is okay not to be okay can be an invaluable gift.

Another way in which something outside yourself can be helpful in developing the yielding, accepting mode of control involves your belief system about the nature of the universe. You will recall from the Module Two discussion by Huston Smith that each spiritual tradition (and philosophy) discusses a continuum of belief between self agency and “other” agency. You may wish to review your own views about the nature of the universe. If you come from a theistic perspective, how much trust and faith are you able and willing to place in “Control by a benevolent OTHER”—i.e., God? For those in a theistic faith community, the belief in a “benevolent Other” can provide support, encouragement, and trust in accepting *what is*, especially when self efforts seem to falter. Individuals with a theistic view may be more willing to let go into “God's hands” as a way of accepting.

In terms of forgiveness, this may be facilitated by spiritual beliefs and community. For example, in Christianity, there is the modeling of “Other” efforts: Jesus forgives our sins, and teaches us we must forgive the sins of others. In Judaism, the teaching is that what is between God and humans, God forgives; but what is between humans, you must address directly, both asking for and extending forgiveness to another.

Even if your views originate in non-theistic traditions that do not identify a specific benevolent Other, such as Buddhism and Taoism, nevertheless in these belief systems you can also find strong encouragement to accept what is, to trust the path of the Tao, and to take refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha (the community).

These individual belief systems about the nature of the universe also can be helpful in learning, practicing, and living the yielding, accepting mode of control.

If your view of the universe is existentially random and indifferent (ie., no Taoist Way of Harmony; no Buddhist “isness”), then the task falls more on your shoulders to stoically learn to control your reactions to events, and create meaning where none may exist, to accept the “thrownness” and randomness of fate. However, in spite of Sartre’s proclamation in *No Exit* that “Hell is other people,” even die-hard existentialists may find that others can also provide comfort, support, even guidance and wisdom as to how best to address and develop, when appropriate and necessary, the yielding, accepting mode of control.

Thus, one important skill in developing the yielding, accepting mode of control is to learn how and when to recognize your own self-management limits and to turn to others for help. Another is how to identify ways of using your beliefs about the nature of the universe in ways that encourage and help you to skillfully and wisely utilize the yielding, accepting mode of control.

**Other strategies.** The following are further ideas about letting go of active control.

***Humor.*** When you laugh, note how this can help your perspective shift. Humor can help us change our attitude toward what is, was, or could be. If we can joke about it, we can often look at a situation with less terror and fear, more acceptance and peace. Humor also may allow us to feel that, although we may not have active control over what’s happening, if we can keep a sense of humor, we won’t be destroyed or defeated.

***Journal writing.*** Writing in a journal about a stressful or traumatic event can help create some “distance” from the situation, and therefore makes us more accepting of it. In reviewing such a journal periodically, you may find that issues that seemed of high importance a day, week, month, year ago, seem much less important with the passage of time. Time does seem to “heal” certain wounds—and we become more accepting of that which formerly was of concern.

***Your ideas?*** What are ways you currently let go of active control and surrender that you feel are *healthy* for you, where it’s a joy to let go? For those with a theistic belief system, letting go of active control might be to truly rest in God’s embrace. For others, it might mean listening to music; floating on water; day-dreaming with no goal or purpose. What are ways in your life that you just allow yourself to be, with no striving, no goal other than what is? What are positive ways you use to let go of active control, to drop the bundle, and change your consciousness to a softer, more serene, more peaceful acceptance?

***Commitment: I “can” to “I will.”*** This fourth step has to do with the transition from “I can” to “I will”. In learning to become more accepting, the process is not necessarily easy or quick, either in terms of ourselves or others. Therefore, in addition to the actual skills of the intervention, we need the skills to maintain our commitment to the process when there are setbacks and frustrations, as well as to address

self-sabotage scenarios.

**Reassessing commitment.** What might make you ambivalent about pursuing the yielding, accepting mode of control? As you begin the actual skills intervention, it is important to look at the following specific aspects of your concern:

1. What might be the possible negative consequences if you do succeed in becoming more accepting?
2. What are the difficult times you see ahead if you decide to gain greater control in this area through positive yielding?
3. What are the potential problems or stumbling blocks you can foresee in trying to “let go” in this area?
4. What excuses might you give to sabotage your own efforts to “let go” (i.e., ways you keep yourself from succeeding)? (adapted from CT, pp. 215-216)

For example, in response to question one, “What are the consequences if you succeed in becoming more accepting?” You may feel that you are “giving in”; or abandoning your efforts to make positive change. You may feel you are “giving up”, or that you have “lost your dream forever” by accepting the present reality. Are you concerned that if you succeed in “accepting,” you may actually experience this as a defeat, that you’ve given up trying to address your concern. For example, if you stop ruminating about your height, and just “accept” it, is that giving up and realizing that you are accepting what is forever? If you practice forgiveness and compassionate acceptance of all parts of yourself, does that mean you’re accepting qualities and aspects of yourself in a way that glosses over real limitations and weaknesses?

In terms of questions two through four, look back at your Control Profile. Do you have a high “quadrant three” overcontrolling mode? A high desire for active control? Note your own Control Profile regarding agency. Do you like to be the one who is in charge? Will it then be particularly challenging for you to learn how to let go and accept help from others?

Do you tend to get “caught up in things” and goals, and forget to slow down and breathe (i.e., enjoy the journey)? Do you notice that you tend to value doing over being? For someone with this profile, the notion of letting go of “productive goals” can be accompanied by fears of completely losing all control with some terrible outcome. For example, if one of the interventions you are using is “meditation” do you sometimes wonder, what am I doing just sitting here “supposedly meditating” but really doing nothing?

If you are someone who is always doing things for others, you may have set a goal to create some quiet time for yourself. But to reach this goal, you will have to stop seeking to exert control on the world for a period of time! You may start to sabotage yourself by wondering what you could be doing productively somewhere else; or how doing less can help you reach your goal? Won’t everything fall apart? You may feel that delegating some tasks to others feels like admitting inadequacy. Further, you may feel that your “identity” is based on doing, and so that by accepting that you have limits, and need other’s help, that you can’t do it all you are giving up and a failure (might this be a

bit of an irrational belief?). Too high desire for active control can often stem from a desire for perfectionism and a control story that says, “Unless I am doing for others (or just doing) all the time, I am a failure (or worthless, lazy, selfish, etc.)” If you hold such a belief, can you reflect on its origins in your life? What were the messages you received about doing? Accepting? How have your beliefs been adaptive for you? How have they impeded your growth?

What have been your experiences of letting go and trusting others, accepting help from them? What are the cultural and familial stories you have learned about “doing things for yourself”; accepting help from others? For people who have high self-agency, the very act of learning to allow and trust others’ help can be part of the intervention.

If you have chosen the yielding mode of control, then perhaps it is time to revisit your cultural and familial “control stories” that might have created negative views in you about what acceptance and yielding mean and could sabotage your efforts. Is there a “super ego” saying, “Life is a struggle, improvement involves effort. Quitters never win, winners never quit.” “You’re not good enough, more is not enough, you’re taking the lazy way out, don’t rest on your laurels”? Although there may be a partial truth in these messages they can be useful, though harsh, motivators for positive assertive efforts), are they helpful for you with this particular concern?

**Reaffirming your commitment.** To help maintain motivation, look back at the reasons you wrote down in Step One, Desire for Control, for wanting to develop more acceptance in this area, including the negative impact if no change is made, and you do not become more accepting. Did you feel you had reached a limit in terms of your active change efforts and decided the area was something that either you weren’t able to change, or didn’t feel was worthy of change? Did you choose the accepting mode in an effort to learn to be less judgmental, intolerant, and punishing of yourself? Was the accepting mode a way to be kinder, more compassionate and more tolerant of yourself, a dropping the bundle so you could be less depleted and demoralized, and feel more refreshed and stronger?

Remember in your body and mind why you chose this path.

Remind yourself that if you only have one mode—an assertive change strategy—you are limited in how you approach the complexity and nuance of situations. By learning to accept in certain situations, you are actually empowering yourself, giving yourself a CHOICE in terms of how you spend your time and energies. Even the existential philosophers, who emphasize “denying our nothingness” and “standing forth in existence,” acknowledge that there is a large part of “reality” that is out of our control: what they call the “thrownness” of existence. One way to address that which is out of our active control is through the yielding, accepting mode of control.

Remember to be careful in distinguishing between negative yielding, which may feel like passivity, resignation, fatalism, being a helpless victim, and positive yielding, in which you are consciously choosing an accepting mode of control as a skillful and healthy way to address a concern. Trust that even though this is a new skill, it’s one that you believe is valuable for you. Practice noticing and letting go of doubt about practicing this mode of control.

Yielding is not a passive process, but an intentional working through, often by letting go of coveted notions of self and identity, security, permanence, fairness and

sureness in life. This productive form of gaining a sense of control--letting go, yielding, and accepting-- may initially bring anxiety and fear of facing and acknowledging the unknown and uncontrollable, and so may be particularly difficult for individuals whose “default” approach to all problems is to rely exclusively on active change methods.

As one person who was beginning to learn to meditate said, “I don’t have the self control to let go of control.” Learning a new skill is not easy, and requires patience, focus, and commitment. However, just because a new skill is difficult, does not mean it isn’t worthwhile to learn. Letting go of and accepting that which is not in our control can, in a seeming paradox, free us up to shift energies from the proverbial “hitting our heads against a brick wall” to finding new ways to gain hope and meaning, purpose and competence.

***Affirmations.*** The following cognitions can help enhance motivation, commitment, and your efforts to utilize the yielding, accepting mode of control. These can be practiced as affirmations and self-statements during the Control Mode Rehearsal as you visualize the new behaviors you wish to adopt. Practice visualizing yourself successfully challenging any negative cognitions you have that would get in the way of your goal. Also, remember that acceptance is both a goal, and a means to the goal, so we need to learn to be “accepting” about our efforts to become more accepting, even when they are not as “perfect” as we would like.

- I am willing to give myself permission to act in new ways--involving the yielding, accepting mode of control-- that will be healthy and life-affirming for me.
- When I am not as accepting as I would like, I will seek to learn to accept that, too. I recognize that initial failure is possible, even sometimes likely, and that I must be willing to persevere in the face of these inevitable setbacks. I see myself handling these setbacks well—with calmness and equanimity as best I am able-- and continuing toward my goal of becoming more accepting.
- I am willing to stay focused, determined, and fully committed to my goal of developing the yielding, accepting mode of control.
- I am willing to pay attention to my reactions—feelings, thoughts, and actions. I will challenge doubts, and explore potentially negative thought patterns, beliefs, and habit patterns which may hinder my efforts to use the accepting, yielding mode of control.
- I am willing to practice self-management techniques on a regular basis that involve the yielding, accepting mode of control in my efforts to develop a healthier mode of living.
- I will stay determined and firmly committed to my goal of becoming more accepting. I feel a sense of excitement and adventure about what

I am pursuing. I see any barriers or setbacks as challenges and opportunities enabling me to grow in strength and understanding, helping me move beyond my self-perceived limitations (*from CT, p. 199*).

## **5. SUCCESS.**

Step Five emphasizes the recognition of successfully developing a yielding, accepting mode of control for your area of concern. What do you notice about how you cognitively and affectively experience success in this mode of control? Successful use of the yielding accepting mode of control usually brings positive feelings and a sense of control through equanimity and serenity. Does it feel like a weight has been lifted from you? For some, there is a feeling of positive letting go of the self as doer, and a resultant lightness. For others, successfully utilizing the yielding, accepting mode of control can produce feelings of self-competence and mastery at having gone from feeling out of control, powerless or helpless in a certain area, to feeling more a sense of control in learning to be serene, calm, and accepting. Again, take some time to notice your own internal reactions, feelings, thoughts, and feel grateful and appreciative for your accomplishment and wise use of the yielding, accepting mode of control.

### ***3.1.4 FIVE STEPS FOR UTILIZING THE ASSERTIVE/ CHANGE MODE OF CONTROL***

The assertive mode, as we have seen, is an effort to shape the future, make things happen, overcome limitations, change or break bad habits, develop new positive ones, have your voice and viewpoint be heard. Look back at the area you've chosen to work on as part of your self-management project. If your goal involves gaining more active control in a specific area, "changing" a situation that is of concern to you, then you are in the right place, and will want to utilize the five steps for gaining an assertive/change mode of control.

#### **1. DESIRE FOR INCREASED ASSERTIVE CONTROL. "I WANT."**

The first step in the process of utilizing the assertive mode of control is, obviously, the desire to have increased assertive control, and the belief that utilizing the assertive mode of control will help you reach your goal.

Notice in your project where you've said that you want to gain more control. At this point, it's important to ask some clarifying questions to ensure that before beginning an intervention, this is the appropriate approach. (You would go through these same questions with a client before moving to the intervention skills). Please spend some time exploring why and to what extent you desire more assertive control in your area of concern. These are questions of discernment, values, and motivation.

***Is it controllable by an assertive mode?*** The first question to ask yourself would be, "Is this situation or behavior within my potential active control?" This is a question of your judgment and discernment about the area's "controllability."

*Does it match my values?* If the answer is yes, then the next question is one of values: Is your desire for increased assertive control in this area healthy? “Are your highest goals and values best served by using an assertive change approach? Is your desire too strong, e.g., are any of your “needs” actually wants? Are these “wants” ones that you feel are truly worth pursuing? When is your desire for assertive control causing you to get upset over trivia—to fix or micromanage things that perhaps are best accepted?

***How motivated am I?*** In the research literature, desire for control has been understood as a motivational variable. Therefore, the next question involves viewing your desire as a gage of your motivation.

**Too high desire?** On the one hand, we can have too much or inappropriate desire for assertive control. As you think about your goal and why you want to achieve it, look at the control-related language you use to describe your desire. Do you notice words like “must,” “have to,” “need”: “Things must change....I need more control over.” Are these terms positive assertive—reflecting a useful and energized motivation; or are the negative assertive, and suggest an overreaching, too compelling and “driven” motivation?

**Too low desire?** On the other hand, our desire may be somewhat ambivalent or too little for the task at hand. For example, part of a person may want to make assertive changes, but another part may not want to rock the boat—why not just continue to accommodate other’s needs and “people please?” Why make the effort to figure out what s/he wants and take responsibility for it? Perhaps there is a fear of trying something new, of making a mistake and having to take the blame if things don’t work out.

Do you notice ambivalent phrases e.g., “I think I’d like to gain more control, but I’m not really sure.” “I’d like it to happen if it’s not too much effort.” “I think maybe I’d like...” “It would be nice if...” Phrases like these may cause a person to pause and consider whether, for their area of concern, they may have “too low” a desire for the effort necessary to seek to increase their active control, and therefore be less willing and motivated to take assertive action.

#### **Source of motivation?**

***Self/other?*** Again, listen to your speech about your desire for control in terms of “who” or what voices are motivating you?. Why do you have a desire for more control? What is the impetus for change? Is it from yourself and freely chosen—internal, self-directed goals--e.g., “I want, I desire...”? Or from others, outside pressure, out of “duty”: e.g., “I’m supposed to”; “others are making me,” “my spouse wants me to change”; “the doctor has told me I should...” “I’m doing it for my family.”

Which of these is most motivating to you? Some people do better when they feel self-directed; others like being “motivated” by others. Note, however, as we discuss in the next section under responsibility, that even if “others” are motivating you, it’s still ultimately your responsibility and choice whether to act toward change.

Motivations also include the reasons you embark on a specific course, whether assertive or yielding. What are the reasons you want to gain more active control? Try to pinpoint your own motivation as clearly as possible. For example, if you are starting an exercise program, is it to improve your health?

Because your doctor told you to? So you can look in the mirror and feel proud? For an interpersonal relationship? To work on creating your body “as a temple of the soul?” Be as honest as you can about where you are, and what you feel would work best for you.

**Level of stress.** In terms of stress level, the analogy of a piece of sand and the oyster can be helpful. The classic research of Yerkes/Dobson’s reverse U shaped curve suggests that both too much stress and too little stress result in low productivity. However, the U shape meant that some stress can be positive and motivating. An itch (like the sand irritant, a problem, a concern) that motivates a desire for increased control—can lead to a search for creative solutions, which in turn can create a pearl—a greater positive sense of control through the assertive/change mode.

It can be helpful at this point to actually write down

1. The most important reasons for your wanting to gain more control in this area.
2. In what ways does this control issue negatively impact your life (i.e., what happens if no change is made).
3. How motivated do you feel you are to gain increased control in this area? Let’s imagine a four point scale with 4=*very much*, 3=*somewhat*, 2= *a little* and 1=*not at all*.
4. On the same scale, how motivated do you feel you are to learn and regularly practice self-control strategies for the assertive mode of control.

What do you feel is the appropriate amount of healthy desire for you in this situation, and how is that reflected in your speech and cognitions? If you feel you are insufficiently motivated, you can either choose to switch to the positive yielding track, or decide you need to increase and strengthen your desire and motivation and stay on the assertive mode track. If you feel you have too high a desire for control, you can either try to “center” yourself and “settle it down” and stay on the assertive mode track, or decide you may need to switch to the yielding mode track as a way of ameliorating your excessively high desire for active control. Be honest with yourself. If you find that you can’t achieve a high enough level of desire to go to the next step (#2. right and responsibility); or you feel your desire is too intense and is misplaced in terms of where and how you are wanting to exert active control, (e.g., it may not be something worth going after)--then you may be on the wrong track. Consider switching over to the yielding mode of control track. Ask yourself, does the following affirmation resonate with your sense of desire about your chosen goal?

**Affirmation, exploration for the assertive, change mode of control.** Below are some affirmations that may be helpful for maintaining and increasing desire for the assertive/change mode of control, which can be edited and adapted to a client’s particular goal and area of concern:

- I want to learn to develop the courage to act in a way that helps me change my current situation. .



- I want to learn to not sit passively by and watch things happen when I know I can impact them in a positive way.
- I want to learn to test my limits, and am willing to try new ways of acting and behaving.
- I want to learn to improve myself, and make the changes that I know are in my best interest.

*I have thought about and reflected on this situation at a time of quiet and stillness. I have an appropriate desire and am sufficiently motivated to seek to gain more active control in this area.*

If so, you are ready to go to Step Two, Right and Responsibility.

## **2. RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY.**

**Right: “I have the right.”** Once you’ve determined that you have the appropriate desire to use assertive control to achieve your chosen goal, and that what you want to achieve is consistent with your values, you can next take a few minutes to examine: 1) your right to gain control in that area, and 2) your responsibility in the change process.

Let’s take a further look at “right”. Having rights is an interesting concept. We need to distinguish between the narcissistic belief that the world owes us something (e.g., entitlement); too little belief that we have a right to anything or a fear that we have no rights (e.g., I don’t have a right to ask for what I want; or a right to be happy, etc.); and appropriate rights: e.g., a belief that we almost always have a right to ask for what we want from ourselves, and from others, and the world (though, in positive yielding quadrant two fashion, it’s important to remember that we don’t always necessarily have a right to get everything we ask for!)

Take a few minutes to reflect on your goal and consider your rights in the situation. Whether you are dealing with intrapersonal issues (losing weight) or interpersonal issues (asserting yourself with a bully at work), ask yourself, Do you have a right to exert active control in these circumstances? Listen to the control language you use as you think about (or write about) this question. How strongly do you feel you have a right to control this area of your life? In considering this issue, you may want to reflect on your. . .

**Messages during upbringing?** What messages did you receive as you were growing up about your right to exert active control? Were some situations appropriate and others not? Was asserting active control appropriate with certain people and not others? Again, consider whether your feeling of your right to seek active change in your chosen area serves your highest view of your self.

**Affirmations.** If so, then you make sure to use positive self-statements as you proceed along this track, such as:

- I have a right to greater control in the area I’m focused on.
- I have a right to think of myself and protect my time.
- I have a right to try to control my thoughts and feelings and reactions to events.

- I deserve to exercise positive control in my life.

Feel each statement within yourself. Breathe as you say it. Feel its truth for you.

**Responsibility.** *“I am responsible for...”* Now we move on to responsibility, which is also a complex subject related to control. Sometimes, as the business research literature shows, a person can have responsibility, but not control, which can lead to high stress. Sometimes we take inappropriate responsibility—e.g., for another person’s substance abuse problem—when, even though we care and are concerned, we aren’t responsible. Sometimes, as the codependency literature suggests, we may need to take responsibility for our enmeshment and collusion in the other’s problem. The Gestalt therapy literature makes the distinction between “I can’t” and “I won’t,” or “I don’t want to.” The latter phrase involves taking personal responsibility for one’s actions (or in this case, inaction).

Sometimes we don’t take responsibility for our own feelings and reactions, but blame others. “He made me angry.” “She hurt my feelings”. “I’m frustrated because someone else took credit for my work.” “No matter what I do, fate intervenes to mess things up.” “It’s not my fault, I can’t get a break!” “I just have to look at food and I gain a pound.” “It’s all my parents’ fault that I am the way I am. They really screwed me up.”

In terms of the latter example, many adult children at some point in their life feel that their parents weren’t perfect, and made mistakes for which they as children were too young to be responsible. However, healthy development involves learning how those mistakes affected them, and taking responsibility for one’s reactions and feelings in the present. A more complex area is the one of abuse. A person can feel like a victim because he or she was physically or emotionally abused—either as a child, or in an adult relationship-- something for which they were not responsible. However, with therapy and time and distance, they may come to realize that they can take responsibility for not continuing to see themselves as a victim because they refuse to be consumed by hatred, to punish themselves, or to let others take advantage of them.

Regarding physical and mental health, there is a debate about the extent to which a person has responsibility. For example, in terms of weight, there are individual differences in metabolism, set points, and body builds, over which we have limited control. On the other hand, there are other areas—eating and nutrition, exercise—where we can take responsibility for our actions and behavior.

**Deepening Exploration.** Therefore, we need to be sensitive to the fact that nuance and complexity are hallmarks of responsibility. Here are some general questions to consider about responsibility. If you look at your own life, do you feel you have difficulty accepting responsibility? Are there times when you don’t take responsibility, or try to avoid it when it is really within your control and area of influence? Are there times when you take too much responsibility (when perhaps it is better left to others, or shared)? Do you ever receive feedback that when you think you’re exerting appropriate responsibility, others tell you, in effect, “it’s none of your business?” What is your belief, in general, about your personal responsibility for your thoughts? Feelings? Speech? Behavior?

Now, let’s look specifically at your self-management project and ask yourself the following questions:

1. In your area of desired assertive control, what aspects of it can you be (or are you) responsible for?
2. What aspects of this area are outside of your control and for which you are therefore not responsible?
3. Do you believe you can be responsible for your *reactions* (thoughts, feelings, speech, behavior) to the aspects that are out of your control? (e.g., how you might react to your spouse's angry behavior if you cannot get him/her to modify that behavior).

An achievable goal must be based on an accurate understanding of your own role in—or contribution to—the problem, as well as your own role in, and responsibility for, creating a “change” in the area of concern. Before moving to the next step, adjust or revise your goal so that it reflects an accurate understanding of your responsibility: is it an area outside of your responsibility or something you shouldn't be responsible for? Is it something that falls within your responsibility?

**Affirmations.** Take a moment to “try on” the following affirmations. Can you say them in such a way that you truly believe them? If not, why not? As you read through them, feel free to edit and adapt them in ways that would seem life-affirming and healthy for your own particular situation and concerns.

- I am not a victim. I have rights as a human being, and a responsibility to stand up for myself.
- I have only so much time and energy; if I fail to protect these resources, no one else will.
- Only I can decide whether I want and am willing to truly make changes in my life.
- I am responsible for my reactions to events.
- I am responsible for how I let other people treat me.
- I am responsible, within the limits of my ability, to effect positive changes in my life. Where I am not able, I am responsible for seeking help and guidance.
- I have a right to be the master and shaper of my own destiny—I can and must take responsibility for directing the course and direction of my life.

One common theme of many of the above affirmations is that if you decide to take an action, it is important to take responsibility for this choice. Of course, there are often many reasons why you are taking a particular action. As noted under “desire”, you may feel that others want you to change. Part of you may even feel “pressured”, “bullied”, “mentally coerced”, “bribed,” or “guilted” into action. Before proceeding, it is imperative to explore these feelings to ensure that you are not proceeding down the assertive/mode five steps progression only in response to pressure from others. However, after considering others' concerns, if you agree that there is some truth in them, and that it is in your interest to change, then you need to take responsibility for that decision. That means you need to decide you won't subsequently “whine” or feel self-pity or blame others for your efforts to change. You need to say you are choosing to do this, intend to do it well, and are responsible for the decision to proceed.

Once you have explored these issues of right and responsibility regarding your self-management project, and feel ready, you can move on to Step Three: Self-Efficacy. Even if you have a desire, the right, and the responsibility, do you really feel you can effect change in the area of concern?

### 3. SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS . “I CAN.”

To what extent do you believe you have the skills, or can learn the skills, to make the changes you want? These skills may include exerting influence to change some aspect of your external environment or situation; or changing your own behavior and speech, and/or your thoughts and feelings. <For further self-exploration, take a few minutes to fill out the worksheet entitled “Assessment of Self-Efficacy Beliefs” in Appendix 3.4, if you have not already done so.>

**Assessing Self-efficacy.** As you reflect on your capabilities, ask yourself how strongly you believe that you will succeed in achieving the assertive change goal of your self-management project. Rate your confidence on the following 7-point scale:

- 1 – I know I will succeed.
- 2 – I am almost positive I will succeed
- 3 – I am pretty sure I will succeed
- 4 – I have some doubts about my ability to succeed, but probably will
- 5 – I don’t think I will succeed
- 6 – I’m almost positive I won’t succeed
- 7 – I know I won’t succeed

If you rated yourself as anything other than a “1”, take a few minutes to identify what you think may hinder your progress, including any fears you have about how you might sabotage yourself. Ask yourself, “Is it possible for me to learn the skills needed to achieve my goal?” For example, if you know that you tend to become impatient and give up when trying to be more assertive, ask yourself if you believe you can learn strategies to anticipate and counteract thoughts about abandoning your efforts

**Enhancing Self-efficacy.** It can be helpful in enhancing self-efficacy beliefs to recall times in your life when you have felt particularly confident in your ability to succeed at some task. Allow yourself to re-experience those feelings in mind and body. Also, reflect on small ways in which you already exercise healthy assertive control in your life. Take a few minutes to notice the competent acts you perform throughout the day, even little things you don’t normally think about.\* Oftentimes, we notice things only when something goes wrong, and we ignore the multiple things that have already “gone right” in the day. As you reflect on current areas of competence in your life, notice the statements you make to yourself, the language you use. Do your words give you credit for what you’re accomplishing? Can you identify recent successes and allow yourself to feel a positive sense of control?

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\* Recall our discussion of the breath cycle at the start of this module. Try to pause a few times throughout the day and consciously notice that every time you take an inbreath can be felt and experienced as a sense of the self as a competent doer, giving a positive assertive sense of control.

*Affirmations.* Some affirmations may be helpful as well. These affirmations can be used to create a pause, some space in order to interrupt a negative cognitive sequence involving thoughts and feelings such as, “I can’t do this, I’m powerless and helpless, I’ve never been very good at making changes;” as well as before actually trying an intervention, to focus and create the optimal context for change:

- I am willing to believe in and trust my ability to succeed.
- I will notice all the areas of my life where I am exercising positive active control. These areas give me the knowledge and strength to know that I can make changes in new areas.
- I am a person of strength and power.
- I am confident I will achieve my goals and address this concern.
- I am competent; I will find a way. I can do this. I feel optimistic in my ability. I
- I can learn to say no to self-defeating thoughts, doubts, and feelings. If I think I can’t and don’t try, I’ll just be proving myself right.
- I recognize that even though setbacks are possible, even likely, I believe I can persevere and overcome them. I trust I can handle them well and continue toward my goal.
- I can learn to be less influenced by other people’s doubts about my ability to succeed, and trust my own decisions and abilities.
- I can practice firm, fair, and calm statements of my needs and feelings.
- I feel I will be able to make changes to help me reach my goal. For those skills and abilities I do not yet have, I trust that I will be able to develop them; and/or find others who can guide and teach me.

Through the practice of affirmations, as well as visualizing success through the Control Mode Rehearsal (discussed in the previous section and in Step Four below), it may be possible to increase self-efficacy beliefs. Also, in the therapy session (Module Four), letting the client know that there are techniques that, when practiced for six to eight weeks, have been shown to be effective, can also help. It is to our advantage to feel that the task we are undertaking is possible, and to maintain a hopeful, confident, optimistic attitude about our ability to succeed.

Notice what your score is. If it is less than four, are you able to increase it through the above affirmations, CMR, and knowledge that there are effective techniques that can be utilized? The main point of this step is that before moving on to learning actual intervention skills, it is important to believe that you have the ability to reach your goals, some positive belief about your chances for success and mastery (e.g., 4 or higher). If your score is lower than that, you may need to reconsider your goal, and perhaps be willing to identify a smaller, more achievable one that you have more confidence you can accomplish. Research has shown that the stronger your self-efficacy beliefs, the more likely you will succeed.

Once you have determined that you have the appropriate desire, right, responsibility, and self-efficacy beliefs, you are ready to consider the actual interventions, Step Four.

#### 4. SKILLS AND COMMITMENT

**Skills.** As we discussed in the previous section, there are certain foundational building blocks –the “alphabet” of therapeutic interventions: body, attentional control, cognitions, images, emotions, behaviors, interpersonal (social support, reinforcement/feedback) The task is to select from those techniques the ones that best match your specific concern, your goal, and your Control Profile.

One helpful way of practicing putting together the “building blocks” most suitable for you is through the extension of the Control Mode Dialogue from Module Two, the

**Control Mode Rehearsal (CMR)**, which we detailed when used for the yielding, accepting mode of control.

When the Control Mode Rehearsal is directed toward the assertive change mode it involves a way to self model through visually role-playing trying on new behaviors. Through guided imagery and self-instructions, you can image see yourself building competence and confidence in the ability to engage in “change” that fits your goal (e.g., slow eating, speaking up, exercising). As discussed in the previous section, in CMR you ***create a personalized script and then model through imagery the desired change you would like to see in yourself: self-management and self-regulation.*** CMR helps you use imagery to see yourself acting exactly as you would like, including visualizing and feeling your body calm and relaxed, making cognitions that are supportive and helpful, and saying and doing whatever supports your identified goal. When creating your script, you may wish to include positive affirmations we have discussed above about your desire, right, responsibility, and belief in your own efficacy to accomplish what you wish to change. As you go through each of these building blocks, try to find what is the best ready position for you in terms of your assertive/change project—physically, mentally, emotionally?

***Body position: preparation for “assertive” action.*** There are many physical postures that prepare us for action. Think of the ready position in tennis, or of a shortstop, or for beginning tai chi /chi gung. In these postures, knees are slightly bent, weight evenly distributed between your two feet, usually with more weight on the front third, the ball of the foot. What is the optimum level of “controlled” arousal for the situation: you may want to be relaxed, minimizing any unnecessary tension, a slow even breathing, eyes softly focused, ready, attentive. These ready positions allow us maximum flexibility in terms of the next step (e.g., moving right or left, up or back in tennis and baseball). By staying balanced and maintaining a calm, quiet breathing, this ready position also allow us to move gracefully and with balance from one “form”<sup>\*</sup> to another. When you think of and try to image the ideal “ready position” for your self-management project, what would that be for you? If you’re thinking of confronting your

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<sup>\*</sup>For example, in Tai Chi these different forms involve degrees of balance and nuance between “yin” accepting energy and “yang” assertive energy, represented by different body postures and hand movements.

mother in law, do you want to be standing, seated? Do you want to be leaning forward? Where are your hands? Where do you want to focus your eyes? Imagine and practice how you want to be breathing.

It may be helpful to take a few moments, either with a dyad partner, or practicing on your own, to explore a ready position that is comfortable for you—both for your self-management project in particular—and one that you might use easily on a daily basis. Again, notice your breath, your hands, your eye focus, where your body is being “balanced.” This attention to your physical posture can be an important part of the preparation for taking an assertive action.

***Mental/emotional attitude.*** What would be the mental/emotional readiness you would want before embarking on an assertive action? You would probably want to be focused, attentive, determined, relaxed and minimizing unnecessary tension/mental contraction, while projecting a certain confidence--the psychological representation of the ready position described above.

What are cognitive statements, self-talk, and instructions that would be helpful for you? The process discussed in the section on negative thoughts and the yielding mode can also apply here. If you notice a negative thought, that can serve as a cue to replace it with a positive one. For example, here is a series of self-critical thoughts: “I am undisciplined, lazy, noncommittal, a procrastinator. I’ve always been a failure” (Quadrant 4, negative yielding). Positive replacements can include: “Careful of all-or-none thinking. I’m becoming increasingly disciplined. I am practicing small changes.” “I can do this”, “I’m ready”; “I’m going to follow through.” “I am proud of myself and the courage I’m showing by being willing to make this change.”

***Visualization.*** The next step would then be to see yourself acting exactly as you wish. This may involve seeing yourself talking a brisk walk; eating slowly and calmly. If your goal involves another person, the next step is to see yourself saying exactly what you would want to say to them, with the confidence, clarity, calmness, and forceful self-assurance that you would ideally want to have. Then you would see them act exactly as you would want in response to your request, actions. Create a scene in which this person acts exactly as you wish. Remember, this is your mind, so why not go for it!

***Discussion: From “in vitro to in vivo”:*** Follow the exercise by examining (either in dyads in class, or in your journal) what you have learned and noting any trouble spots. For example, sometimes an individual may “rehearse” speaking assertively to her husband. Next, she could imagine different scenarios of how her husband might react, ranging from hostile to pleasant and create and role play in her mind ways that she would ideally like to respond to these reactions: i.e., staying calm in body and mind, choosing the best possible option (dongjing), staying on target in terms of her goal.

Discuss ways in which you plan to apply this exercise to the actual situation which concerns you--once you have practiced this CMR a sufficient number of times that you feel increasingly comfortable and confident in your “self-modeling” rehearsals.

Another step in the transition from in vitro to in vivo would be to role play situations that lend themselves to this approach (e.g., an interpersonal issue) with a classmate or another person; set specific times for an exercise program; decide on environmental programming strategies (e.g., removing inappropriate foods from the house); and think of places to put stimulus cues as reminders for “encouragement.

These stimulus cues can also actually be the emotions or thoughts themselves, which can serve as cues for interrupting a problematic sequence. In other words, each time you notice a negative thought or a certain feeling (e.g., anger, stress, fear, sadness) in the “natural environment,” you can make that a cue for beginning the practice of a “control mode rehearsal”—an abbreviated version of what we discussed above: e.g., focusing on diaphragmatic breathing, practicing new thought patterns, creating positive images, re-centering your body.

**A little help from our friends: The role of “others” in our assertive/change self”-management project.** Just as other people can help you in working toward the yielding mode of control, they can also support you in developing the assertive, change mode of control.

To take a mundane example, let’s say there is a plumbing problem in your house. You want to change the situation—to correct and fix it. You may not have plumbing skills, but you may know a good plumber. Therefore, you would have a high belief in your efficacy to “get the problem fixed.”

Sometimes, making change involves enlisting others’ help. This could include a support group of people focused on a similar problem, letting others know you are trying to make changes and asking for their reinforcement and feedback to help keep you on the path. For example, you might say, “Here’s what I’m what I’m trying to do; I want you to know and enlist your support as you are willing and able.” It could also include seeking help and guidance (e.g., a therapist, counselor) to teach us skills we need to learn. Thus, other people can serve as a source of self-efficacy by providing us (as well as teach us) skills necessary for our change project, as well as be a source of encouragement and support in enhancing our commitment.

The process of change is not necessarily easy or quick, either in terms of ourselves or others. Therefore, in addition to the actual skills of the intervention, we need the skills to maintain our commitment to the process when there are setbacks and frustrations.

**Commitment: “I will”** The desire to change can be encapsulated in the phrase “I want.” The belief one can change is “I can.” Commitment involves the determination to say “*I will*” do what’s necessary to make the change. Here we discuss the transition from “I can” to “I will” in which you imagine the specifics of how you will follow through and address any potential self-sabotage scenarios.

Many of the mind-body exercises discussed earlier can help boost your chances of success (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing to promote relaxation, role-playing to try on new behaviors, guided imagery to relax or build feelings of competence, and self-instructions to alter negative thought patterns and feelings). These building blocks are both



preparations for change AND forms of change in and of themselves—skills to help you reach your goal.

**Exploring possible self-sabotage/resistances.** It is also helpful to anticipate any ways you might sabotage yourself, and explore possible resistances.

1. What might be the possible negative consequences if you do succeed in changing?
2. What are the difficult times you see ahead if you decide to gain greater control in this area?
3. What are the potential problems or stumbling blocks you can foresee in trying to develop greater control?
4. What excuses might you give to undermine your own efforts to change (i.e., ways you keep yourself from succeeding)? (*from CT, pp. 215-216*)

Think back to the end of Module Two when we practiced the Mode Dialogue exercise and you described your Mode 3 (Negative Assertive) and Mode 4 (Negative Yielding) “characters”. Mode 3 and Mode 4 are examples of self-sabotaging approaches to difficulties. Still, although you want to reduce them or eliminate them altogether, it is instructive to remember the helpful or protective intentions of each character and the ways you would like them to support you in adopting more positive assertive (and positive yielding) behaviors.

**Enhancing motivation.** Finally, to enhance and maintain motivation, look back at the reasons you wrote down in Step One, Desire for Control, for wanting to make changes in your life, including the negative impact if no change is made. It is also helpful to recall times in your life when you have faced adversity and roadblocks, and been able to be resilient, committed, and overcome these difficulties to make successful changes in your life.

In addition to recognizing resistances and exploring barriers to change, remembering your initial motivation to change, recalling past times you have been successful, and visualizing success, the following cognitions can help enhance motivation, commitment, and change efforts. These can be practiced as affirmations and self-statements during the Control Mode Rehearsal as you visualize the new behaviors you wish to adopt. Practice visualizing yourself successfully challenging any negative cognitions you have that would get in the way of your goal. What might be self-defeating statements you might make to yourself. Again, you could write these on one side of an index card: “I can’t,” “This is too hard.” “I missed a day of exercise (ate too much) and have blown it. I might as well give up.” Then flip the card over and write down honest, accurate rebuttals or responses that reflect your capabilities, the half full side of the glass. “I worked out twice this week already. I ate well most of the day. I’m a fighter, and can try again. One mistake doesn’t make me a failure.” Be aware of how you “reinforce yourself” and how you “punish yourself.” This is a time for gentle, firm pushes when there is backsliding—not mean self-condemnation, and a time for strong encouragement of small positive steps.

What control stories do you know or have you been taught that might be helpful here to maintain your motivation? For example, one lesson many of us may have been taught is that “quitters never win, and winners never quit.” A “control story” that typifies this way of thinking is one of a person trying to break a stone into small pieces. He hits the stone 499 times, and each time nothing changes. Finally, with the 500<sup>th</sup> hit, the stone crumbles. The story concludes that, even though the person couldn’t see any change in the stone, it was really each “hit” that prepared the way for the breakthrough. The moral is, keep trying even if you feel discouraged and don’t appear to be succeeding.

Some people, when faced with challenges and adversity, shrink away. Others become more determined, maintaining an optimistic belief in their own ability to cope. When there are difficulties in your life, how do you handle them? Do you see them as a reason to give up and quit? Or do you find a renewed motivation to refocus, “digging deeper” to find inner resources, strength, determination, and even creativity to help you succeed? There is a story in the “cold calling” business community that it takes one hundred calls to achieve one good outcome. Therefore, each time the person on the other end hangs up, is rude, or doesn’t respond positively, the should tell herself, “One step closer to success.” It is important on the path to acknowledge each small step heading in the right direction.

A little humor can be helpful. As Ashleigh Brilliant once said, “I find it easier to be a result of the past than a cause of the future.” Change is not easy. It is important to recognize and be proud of your efforts, and honor, encourage, and reinforce your progress and your determination to stay the course.

**Affirmations.** Other positive affirmations can include:

- I recognize that failure is possible, even sometimes likely, and that I must be willing to persevere in the face of these inevitable setbacks. I see myself handling these setbacks well and continuing toward my goal.
- I am willing to give myself permission to act in new ways that will be healthy and life-affirming for me.
- I am willing to explore the potentially negative thought patterns, beliefs, and habit patterns that I have never really critically evaluated.
- I am willing to be proactive and use self-management techniques in my efforts to develop a healthier mode of living.
- I am willing to pay attention to my reactions—feelings, thoughts, and actions—and to use specific focusing techniques to become aware of the subtle and specific feedback my body gives me. (*from CT, p. 219-220*)

- I will stay determined and firmly committed to my goals. I feel a sense of excitement and adventure about what I am pursuing. I see any barriers or setbacks as challenges and opportunities enabling me to grow in strength and understanding, helping me move beyond my limitations (*from CT, p. 199*).

## **5. SUCCESS. I DID IT!**

Step Five emphasizes the recognition of positive change. One of the advantages of a clearly stated goal is makes it possible to see to what extent progress is being made, and to determine when you have in fact reached your goal. How do you cognitively and affectively experience success?

Assertive change can bring positive feelings and a sense of control resulting from competence and mastery. You have gone from *I want* to *I have a right and responsibility* to *I can* to *I will* to *I did it!* There can be a great sense of satisfaction in having the courage, determination, will, to have gone from feeling out of control, powerless or helpless in a certain area, to feeling more in control and empowered. When you achieve your goal, it's important to focus on these feelings of success and accomplishment. Robert White called this the "joy of being a cause." Pay attention to the ways that you have been successful in actively gaining control over the area of your life you chose to work on, and take time to savor and enjoy the accomplishment.

## **HOMEWORK.**

This ends the first section of Module Three. In trying to facilitate your own self-exploration, we have covered a lot of material and raised many questions and issues in each of the five steps, as well as presented a variety of techniques and interventions. Not all of these questions, issues and techniques will need to be discussed and explored in the same depth with each client, but we felt important that you as the evolving therapist explore the issues in depth for yourself as preparation for when you address them with your clients.

**3.1.A.** Review the intervention material and select one or more interventions relevant to your self-management project. Write down in your journal why you selected the particular intervention(s) you do in terms of how it matches and is tailored to your Control Profile and goal.

**3.1.B.** Begin your intervention while continuing to monitor your self-management area.

**3.1.C.** Now would be a good time to review and expand your self-management contract (Appendix 3.7), including choosing which interventions you believe best match your control profile and goal. It's time to put together everything you've learned as it relates to your own self-management project, which you observed in the first module, and set a goal about in the second module, and now are ready to select interventions to help you reach your goal.

**3.1.D** As you apply the intervention, continue listening to your control speech, and notice any “control stories” and “control dynamics” that arise for you. Take the time to explore these further in your journal. This is an opportunity both for personal discovery about the background and roots of these stories and dynamics. It is also a chance to see how your personal experiences contribute to (and may be influenced by) your theoretical orientation, specifically that part of your theoretic orientation that involves your control story about human nature and it’s ability to change and to self-regulate emotions, thoughts, and behavior.

**3.1.E.** In your journal, create a “bank” of positive assertive experiences, images, memories; and positive yielding experiences, images, and memories. Also keep a look out for pictures or brief stories of what would represent to you someone acting in a positive assertive or positive yielding way that you would like to emulate, and that could serve as a model for you. This “memory” and “model” bank can then be there for you to draw from as needed for your self-management project.

**3.1.F.** Even if you’re not using a technique we’ve discussed as part of your self-management project, are there any you’d like to learn more about? Which ones “match” you best? Which ones involve a “stretch” for you, but you think might be helpful for you to explore further.

**3.1.G** Write down any issues, questions, concerns, and/or insights that arise. about the practice of your intervention(s) to discuss in the next class.

**3.1.H.** As you are willing and interested, keep practicing the “breath cycle” , (presented at the start of this Module 3.1 and see if you can feel/experience its relation to modes and agency.

And please keep your “control-oriented” eyes and ears open for any show and tell material to bring in for the next session. ☺