

Keeping Perspective and Our Sense of Control



Every person has a unique perspective. It is formed by “their life experiences, values, current state of mind, the assumptions they bring into a situation and many other things.”¹

Living within our values can help lead to a clear perspective, and a sense of calm. It can increase our confidence in ourselves, our relationships and our ability to make meaning in life. But what happens when day to day living is so challenging that it becomes hard to “keep perspective?”

Stress and Perspective

When uncertainty arises in life, our stress responses may become activated. Emotions like fear, sadness or anger may be generated which can also affect how our bodies react to situations. This can quickly affect how we see ourselves and the world around us. It’s not that our clearer sense of perspective has disappeared. It has just become clouded by the

thoughts and emotions that come up in stressful situations. It can lead to feeling disconnected from our sense of self or purpose.

Vulnerability and Perspective

When we get caught up in worries about what will happen next, we start to feel vulnerable. We might be afraid that others will see our vulnerability and judge us for not being stronger. The more our minds become focused on the things that stress us out, the more our perspective narrows. We lose touch with the things we feel good about in our life, who we are as a person or the ways we look for support, or indeed, the values we previously held dear. When that happens, our sense of control and confidence can also fade. We may withdraw or feel isolated, and experience sharper judgements against ourselves and others.

Turning toward our vulnerabilities and fears with a sense of kindness can help recover our own clear perspective and reconnect us to the love and joy in our lives. Our sense of compassion for ourselves and others only grows when we recognize that we are all only human, after all!

Our Common Humanity

As health and human services providers, we can see both the joys and struggles in the lives of the people we support. No matter our role in the healing and caregiving process, frontline or otherwise, we each have a view into the great gifts of human service. It’s natural for us to empathize with others. Showing empathy helps our relationships. It also helps our emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health.

During the pandemic, each one of us has experienced moments where we simply don’t feel grounded. Between our personal losses and the losses we hear about in the lives of others, a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability can become constant. When that’s all we focus on, we lose our sense of perspective. Our confidence is lower and we struggle with things we ordinarily do well. Our fear of making an error becomes greater.

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We get impatient with ourselves (and others), thinking that we should be stronger or more skilled at coping. We often wish things ‘would be or should be’ different.

Remembering that we are not alone and that many others are experiencing the same thing, helps us regain some perspective so that we can, in fact, see how unfairly we judge ourselves in our own moments of need. To know that others are where we are at will probably help us grow in compassion for ourselves and others.

Looking Within for Our Sense of Control

When we are suffering in any way, it is important to remind ourselves that while this moment is a challenge, we ourselves are not the challenge. Our whole life is not a challenge. Keeping perspective is not about maintaining control. It is about accepting that we are human and remembering that life holds unexpected challenges for us all. It is OK to say we are afraid because we don’t know what might come next. This allows us to return to our values and to remember our abilities and strengths. It also helps us to appreciate the values, abilities and strengths of others.

In this way, our sense of perspective and control are interconnected with our spiritual health. When we strengthen our perspective, our goodness and our gifts quickly emerge and remain close at hand. When we acknowledge our place in the common humanity, our need to control the uncontrollable can be released. Well-being in general becomes more possible.

Here are some resources that may be help in the *practice* of keeping perspective:

Something To Read:

[Spiritual Health and Stress Relief](#)

[Seven Ways to Feel More in Control In Life](#)

[How Our Body Can Help with Strong Emotions](#)

[Cultivating an Internal Locus of Control](#)

Something to Watch or Listen to:

[Mindfulness of Emotions in the Body](#)

[Rest in your Breath](#) to Ease A Busy Mind (even a single second helps!)

[Fear as A Widow to Courage, Confidence and Tender Hearted Bravery](#)

[Understanding Self-Compassion](#)

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Something to Do

[Turn towards the Soles of Your Feet](#)

[How I Treat A Friend Exercise](#)

[Practice with Gratitude](#)

[Local Resources for Coping with Overwhelm](#)

References:

1. <https://www.forbes.com>