

# 16 letting go of control

## for you to know

It is normal for people to want to have control over what happens in their life. But in reality, there are many, many things we cannot control, no matter how hard we try. Because it is an impossible task, trying to have control over everything and everyone can raise your anxiety level. When you are able to let go of the need to control everything, your anxiety level will be lower.

Matt felt best when everything went the way he planned it. He liked his life to be in order, and he liked to be in charge of it. That worked fine as long as he was able to stay in control, but when unexpected things happened, or when people didn't act the way he wanted them to, Matt would get very anxious.

One week, Matt had a harder time than usual. His best friend decided to go to a ball game with another friend instead of watching videos with Matt. His English teacher wouldn't give him an extra day to finish his paper. On his paper route, he made ten dollars less in tips than he had hoped for. As these things that he couldn't control happened, Matt felt like his whole life was falling apart.

Matt's mom noticed that he seemed very anxious when she drove him to school. He told her what had been happening and how frustrated he was. He couldn't make things be the way he wanted them to be. Matt's mom told him that no one can control everything and that was okay. He would survive. He needed to let go of trying to control those things and put his focus back on the things he could control.

Matt tried to take her advice. When he started feeling anxious about his friend, his English teacher, and his tips, he tried to remind himself that these things were out of his control but that he was okay. He found another friend to hang out with Friday night, handed in the best paper he could, and just accepted that he hadn't made as much money as he'd planned. When he was able to let go, he felt much more peaceful.

activity 16 \* letting go of control

directions

Circle the response that tells how much control you have over each of these situations:

If I will have fun at a party	No control	Some control	Complete control
If everyone in school will like me	No control	Some control	Complete control
If I will break the swim team record	No control	Some control	Complete control
If I study hard for a test	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my parents will get divorced	No control	Some control	Complete control
If the person I like will ask me to dance	No control	Some control	Complete control
If I eat too much	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my friend will agree to see the movie I want to see	No control	Some control	Complete control
If it will rain on the day of my pool party	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my science project partner will work as hard as I do	No control	Some control	Complete control
If the teacher will give me a break on my grade	No control	Some control	Complete control
If I will get an award	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my best friends will spend as much time with me as I want them to	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my friend will take my advice	No control	Some control	Complete control
If my parents will give me the privileges I want	No control	Some control	Complete control
If I am a kind person	No control	Some control	Complete control

## more to do

Make a list of the things, situations, or people you try to control. Next to each item you have listed, write "no," "some," or "complete" to tell how much control you have over it.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Which of these would be the hardest to let go of trying to control, and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What does trying to let go of control feel like? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think will happen if you let go of control? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The thought of letting go can make some people feel more anxious at first. But once they become comfortable and know that they will be safe even if they do not control everything, they change their expectations and are able to lower their anxiety level.

If you have trouble letting go of control, try doing or redoing Activity 12: Thought Stopping, Activity 13: What's the Worst That Could Happen, or Activity 32: A Higher Power.