



Learning How to Control Yourself

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Normal people are out of control. This is not an observation, a theory or an opinion. This is a statement of scientific fact. Decades of research, all the way back to 1936, prove conclusively that the normal person is not in control of themselves, rather they are controlled by their subconscious mind. And, because all this happens automatically, there is, in fact, no real control at all being exerted in the ordinary behaviour of everyday life.

Reflect on this for a few moments. Someone pulls out in front of you in traffic – someone you've never met, don't know and are unlikely to ever come across again – and you automatically get agitated, annoyed, even stressed. Clients have said to me that the morning commute leaves them totally stressed out and exhausted before the working day ever gets going! Or, someone you claim to love – a husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend – does something silly like squeezing the toothpaste from the middle of the tube and you automatically lose your head. Indeed, it is a common fact that most domestic arguments, fights, even murders arise over something silly or insignificant.

As normal people, we spend our lives reacting. These reactions are automatic – driven by our subconscious mind in a way that is so deeply rooted that we seem to have no control. The reactions just happen, often making matters worse rather than better. In fact, the subconscious mind's automatic processes (known as automaticity to psychologists) are a finely tuned set of responses that enable us complete habitual tasks without having to pay them any attention. Unfortunately, as we go through our adult lives, most things become habitual and, as a result, completely automatic. We are no more than robots, living lives created by reactions which are automatically dictated by our subconscious programming. We are out of control.

That subconscious programming was "installed" through "snapshot learning" when you and I were young and impressionable. People and events that made a big enough impression on us during our formative years were freeze-framed into our deep subconscious. Those snapshots are re-run every time we encounter similar events during our adult life and, as a result, automatically create our spontaneous, thoughtless, mindless, reaction. In other words, we react to what's happening in the present moment based on programs that are decades out of date. Little wonder husbands beat wives, wives beat husbands, bosses bully workers, etc, etc, etc. The list is endless and, as normal people, we are completely unable to stop the cycle of reactive, destructive behaviour.

We need to regain control. If we do regain control, something extraordinary happens. We start acting – doing the right thing, doing what is most important, most appropriate and most effective just at the right moment. We start creating a different set of behaviours, a different “chain reaction” – because if we change our behaviour towards others, others (even if they never regain control of their minds) will at the very least react differently. We create a different experience – a different life.

We regain control by stopping. Stopping ourselves in our tracks, to see if we are behaving in the best possible way or if we are just knee-jerking reacting like all the other mindless morons. We cannot, however, stop ourselves in our tracks, or call ourselves to attention, unless we relearn how to pay attention. As children, we were attention experts. If we got a new toy, we used all our five senses to fully experience the toy – we saw, felt, heard, smelled and tasted it. As adults, I send my clients for a walk to experience their five senses and some of them return chewing bits of hedge or ivy because they couldn't get a handle on the taste that was already there in their mouths beforehand!!

Normal adults cannot pay attention (scientific fact yet again) – and, yet, paying attention is the only key you need to open the door into creating a life free of reaction, the life that you really, really want. Paying attention enables you take control of your mind – because paying attention to what you are experiencing here and now stops your subconscious mind paying attention to the programs that are decades out of date (the programs which otherwise dictate your automatic reactions). You have to be “abnormal” to pay attention. You have to become again like a little child – childlike not childish.

So, starting right now, see, feel, hear, smell and taste where you are. Take five or ten minutes every day to do just this. It will be mechanical, seem pointless, at first. But, I can assure you (as can many Universities from Milan to Chicago from East London to Stanford) that doing something so simple will change the very fabric of your life and will enable you be the most effective, most efficient, most successful, most happy person you can be – effortlessly.