

RESILIENCE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL

During stressful and challenging times, how we think about the situation makes a big difference to how quickly and effectively we 'bounce back'.

A key dimension of resilience is 'Taking Control' (see [The Resilience Model Factsheet](#)). We 'take control' by deliberately choosing thoughts, feelings and behaviours that will help us get the best results possible. This is particularly true during challenging times in our lives.

The answers to these questions depend on whether you have an Internal or External Locus of Control.

Locus of Control (LoC) is a theory that refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they are in control of their lives.

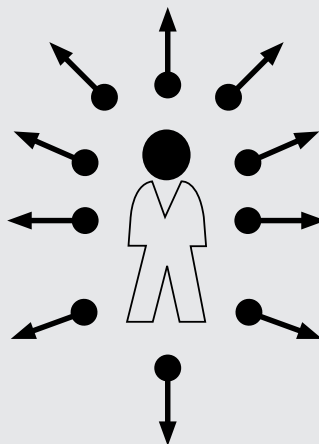
Are you in control of what happens in your life, or is someone else?

Do you influence the outcome of a difficult situation, or is the outcome out of your hands?

Are you involved in the things that happen, or do they happen around you?

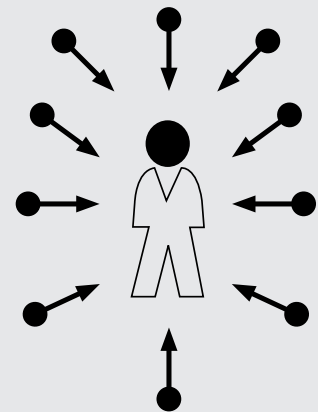
Do you recognise the role you play in everything you do, or are things always other people's fault?

Internal Locus of Control



"I'm in control of my thoughts, feelings and behaviours. I can impact my life."

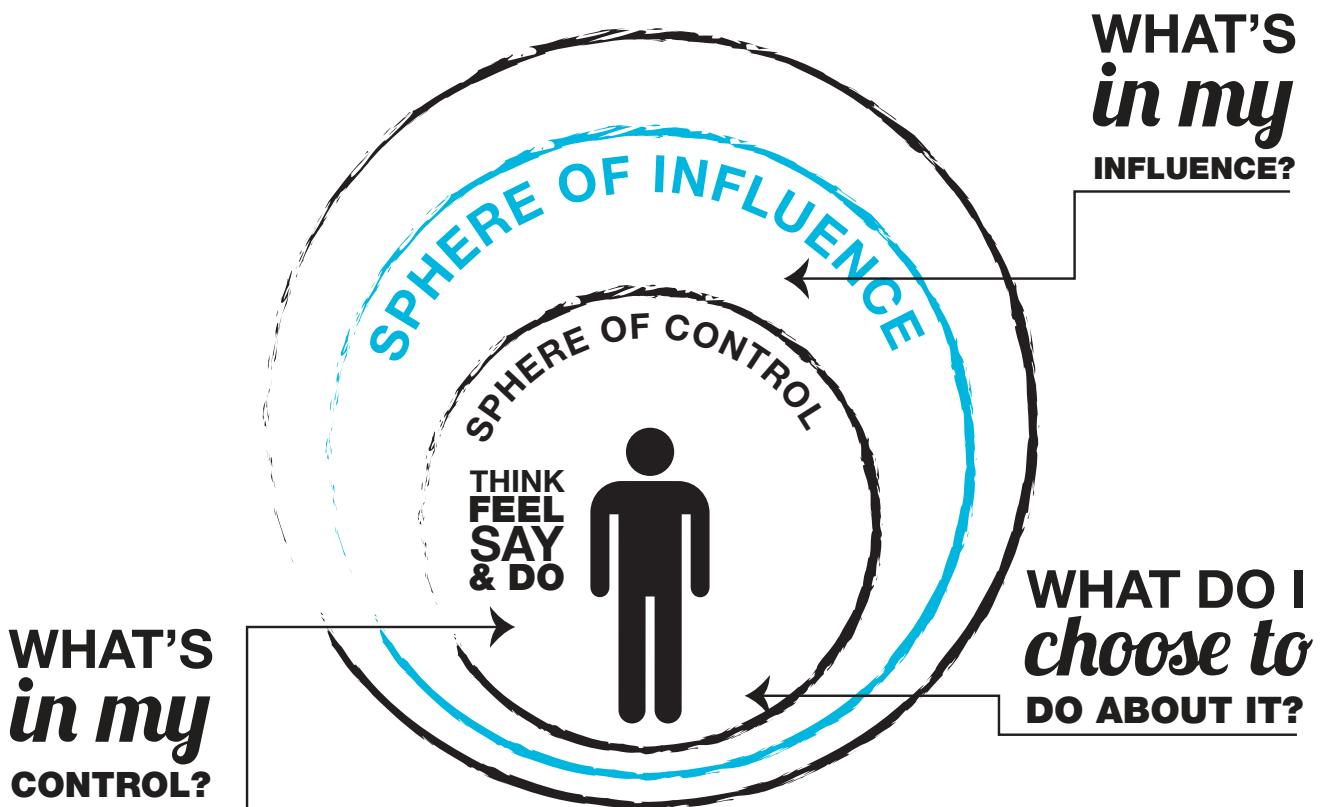
External Locus of Control



"Things in life just happen and I have no control over them."

People who believe they are the master of their own destiny have a dominant 'Internal Locus of Control'. On the other hand, people who believe they are the victim of people or circumstances have a dominant 'External Locus of Control'.

Research suggests an Internal LoC acts like a 'buffer' against stress (Bollini, et al., 2004). That is, the more you believe you have control over what happens to you, the less likely you will feel stressed during challenging times. People with an Internal LoC will look at a challenging situation and think, "What is in my control? What can I influence? What can I do about this situation?" With this kind of attitude, they are more likely to try to improve the challenging situation or at least change their thinking about it. This is how an Internal LoC helps us be more resilient in the face of adversity.



Bollini, A.M., Walker, E.F., Hamann, S. & Kestler, L., (2004). 'The influence of perceived control and locus of control on the cortisol and subjective responses to stress. *Biological Psychology*, vol. 67 (3).