

# IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

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## Who's in the driver's seat?

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*Do you ever feel as if you have little control over the events, tasks, and demands you encounter each day?*

Being overwhelmed and feeling out of control of one's choices can leave a person feeling like a boxer who is "on the ropes"—just trying to survive the round. The good news is it does not have to be that way. Healthy control over one's life is possible, but it takes time to develop.

Initially, when people complain about having little or no control over the demands of their lives it is often partly a result of a desire to please others. When we place our desire to please others too high on our list of priorities, we unconsciously invite others to take control and choose our direction, our priorities, and where we will spend our energy.

Think for a moment, "If my life were an automobile, who would be driving it?" Uncertain? Then again, you may know them. My point is, if it is not you, it is likely you have given someone else control and that person is steering your actions and energy in the direction that most benefits them. But before you become angry with that person, remember under most circumstances, no one can get in the driver's seat of your life without you allowing it. Consequently, we must accept some ownership in the situation.

For instance, consider your schedule for a moment. Did that which is draining you originate with you, or did you get pulled into it? If it wasn't your plan, why are you doing it? Did you agree to it before you thought it through? Could it be eliminated or rescheduled? Many times we have inadvertently set ourselves up to be out of control.

Believe it or not we can teach people how we want them to treat us! Consider this example. We get a call from someone who has a history of constantly springing things on us last minute and they are always desperate for our help. First of all, we have taught them they can do this to us by always saying "yes." Try this--say, "no." "No," "Sorry, I'm busy then," "Don't have time," or "I already have plans." You get the idea, don't do it! If you do as they ask, you are *rewarding* their behavior. As an alternative, you can always say, "Next time call me earlier," or "I need more notice," or "That's just not my area of expertise."

Don't lose hope and don't stay angry or frustrated! Instead, consider the following suggestions for getting behind, and staying behind, the wheel of your life:

1. Set your own priorities or direction—healthy control requires a plan
2. Communicate the direction you have chosen

for your time, energy, or life—don't leave room for assumptions by others.

3. Stay the course. Remain committed to your chosen direction—set healthy boundaries. After all, who's expectations are we trying to meet?
4. Stay focused on your destination or goal—don't waver when you're tested.

Sometimes staying in the driver's seat is as difficult as getting into it. Be prepared for those who will constantly test your resolve. Schedule your time and energy before anyone else can do it. Schedule your leisure time, your time with your children or spouse, time for your hobby, and time to chill out and relax.

Then, when they come calling, just reply, "Sorry, I have something already scheduled." That's when you will really feel the power and freedom of being in the driver's seat!

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