

# SOLUTIONS

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## Are You a Thermostat or a Thermometer?

Not sure? Let me explain. A thermometer simply responds to whatever its conditions are – it takes your temperature. It has no choice but to be controlled by its environment. On the other hand, the thermostat influences what the conditions will be—it sets the tone/mood (temperature).

Do you simply react to whatever is thrown your way? Do you allow something negative that occurs to make you negative and ruin your day? Or do you decide what kind of attitude you're going to have no matter what happens?

Here's the good news! As individuals we get the choice to be either the thermostat or the thermometer. Need help becoming more like a thermostat? Here are a few tips on how to increase control over your mood.

### **Change your thoughts.**

Put a positive spin on any negative thought or issue you are struggling with. Stuck in traffic? Are you going to choose to feel frustrated or view it as an opportunity to take inventory of your day? Begin to view problems as "growing opportunities!"

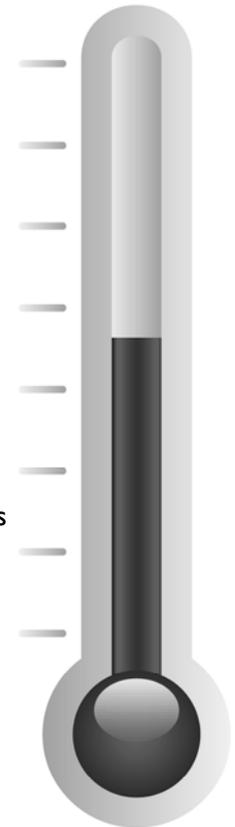
### **Recognize what you can control.**

Focus on the things that you can change and put those into action. We can always control what we say and how we behave. Decide how you want to handle yourself in the situation. If nothing else, it will distract you from the things that are out of your control (and are so irritating)!

### **Find a healthy outlet.**

There are times when bad things happen that are out of our control. Learn ways to soothe yourself, like taking a walk or putting on your favorite music. When things feel chaotic, organizing something totally unrelated (like a closet) can help you feel in control again. When you have calmed down, address your mood so that you can alter it – begin to choose how you want to view the situation: Is it really the end of the world, or more of a "bump in the road?"

As you begin to shift from being a thermometer to a thermostat, you will find you feel more stable and calm, regardless of the situation. If you would like help with the process, come see us at your EAP!



# Do you have a **Bucket List?**

What are your goals? It's such a broad question... Sometimes I have goals that look like a set of very minor tasks to accomplish over the next hour (mostly to keep myself from getting distracted!) Sometimes I have things that I want to get done in the next few weeks, like getting a house project completed or scheduling a workshop to attend. But some goals are bigger — things I want to accomplish before I leave this world. Maybe that sounds morbid, but think about it. Who wants to be in the “sunset” of life and have regrets?

Routinely in my office, I suggest to my clients to make a “bucket list,” a list of things they would love to try, see, experience or learn if there were no barriers. Bucket lists come in all shapes and sizes, anything from traveling to a remote destination to planting an herb garden to learning Spanish.

For most of us, when we first became independent of our parents, we were not financially able to chase our dreams, or didn't know ourselves well enough to even have a sense of what our dreams were. By the time we figure those things out, and maybe have the funds to support some of it, there are families to raise and priorities are completely shifted. So even little “dreams” get pushed to the side.

There will always be negative things happening to us or around us, and I am a firm believer that the more positives you put into your life, the less impactful the negative stuff will be. But positives don't always just fall into your lap. In 1997, Jim Carrey (wildly successful comedian/ actor) gave an interview with Oprah Winfrey. He told her that before he became successful, he wrote himself a check for \$10,000,000, and in the memo section wrote, “for acting services rendered.” He dated the check for “Thanksgiving 1995.” He folded up the check and put it into his wallet. In 1995, he received \$10,000,000 to make the movie “Dumb and Dumber.” Now, I am not suggesting that if you or I write ourselves a check for ten million dollars that we will be millionaires in 10 years—that was a realistic dream for someone who has the skills to be a professional athlete or work in Hollywood. But when you allow yourself to dream and explore new endeavors, your mindset automatically shifts in that direction. Realistic and manageable goals start to become realities. I may not be able to afford a trip to Hawaii today, but if I research it, see what it would take, pick a reasonable date (even if it is three years from now) and decide how much money to put away each month, it starts to become reality.

Spend a little time with yourself, keep a notebook or use the note app on your smart phone, and for the next few weeks, write down any ideas you have about things you want to experience, see, or do. Don't censor it! It needs to be an ongoing list because interests change over time and you never know what kind of encounters will trigger a new idea. Once you have a lengthy list, go through it and pick a few to research. Even if you have something on that list that never comes to fruition, sometimes even the exploration/ research is fun (I have “planned” so many vacations via the computer; vacations I will probably not go on, that I could probably be a travel agent!). See if you can commit to a few goals to get you closer to making this a reality. You may want to “tweak” your dreams to fit into a more realistic option—either way it will be something new in your life. This is the stuff of life! You aren't going to look back and say, “I'm so glad I got the yard cut every week,” or, “One of my favorite memories is getting the laundry done!”



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