

# Beyond Our Control



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The holiday season brings joy to some and stress to others. A psychological shift occurs during the last few months of the year as we desperately try to cram in the things we "said we'd do" – January's Promises. Doctor appointments we delayed, business goals we set, attics we swore we would clean before adding more. The promises haunt us while we strive to enjoy the season. The two competing forces can drown our holiday spirit.

Goal setting is an important part of life. However, goals are often a moving target that can cause stress if not put in proper perspective. When you feel squeezed between finishing what you set out to do at the beginning of the year and realizing it's just too much to accomplish, consider these insights:

- A goal is like the horizon, you never quite reach it because as you approach, it keeps expanding. But look at how far you traveled in the attempt. You went farther than you thought.
- Deepak Chopra encourages us to focus on what we want, set the goal and then...let go of the outcome, for we cannot control the outcome.
- Stephen Covey spends an entire chapter in "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" discussing the "Circle of Concern" (things we cannot control) and "The Circle of Influence" (things we can control). He teaches us how to grow our Circle of Influence and shrink the Circle of Concern. Spend less time worrying over what we cannot change and more focus over what we control.
- Viktor Frankl, a Freudian psychologist and a concentration camp survivor, wrote that while his captors could control his environment and personal freedom, they could not take away the last of the human freedoms – his power to choose his response to the situation. We can choose how all of this will affect us.

In guiding clients, we make distinctions between what we can and cannot control when focusing on goals. We do not control stock prices, inflation, taxes, unemployment or business profits. We do control our attitudes, our work ethics, our financial choices and even our feelings of abundance. As you review the year, focus on your triumphs. It's OK if you did not write your holiday cards. Cards are just as fun later. It's OK if you clean the attic in January. It's still waiting patiently. Prioritize essential goals for the end of the year, focus on what you can control and let go of the outcome. Choose to have a wonderful holiday season.