

33. Vision Activity: What's Stopping You?

This thing in front of you. This issue. This obstacle – this frustrating, unfortunate, problematic, unexpected problem preventing you from doing what you want to do ...
What if it wasn't so bad? Holiday (2015), p. 1

Deciding what your goals are and making a plan can, quite often, be the easy bit. We usually set off with good intentions and then *boom*, we get hit with an obstacle or a number of obstacles that slow us down or in some cases stop us from following through on our goals. The first thing to remember is that this is completely normal. As Ryan Holiday says in the quote above, if you have a goal worth pursuing it's likely that there are going to be some obstacles on the route. So don't beat yourself up about it. Accept this as part of the journey and plan a way through – it might not be that bad!

Sometimes these obstacles can be completely out of our control – a sudden change of circumstances in our life such as illness or family problems, for example. However, we sometimes think that these obstacles are out of our control when in fact we might be able to do something about them. This activity is one to do if you find that you're not making the progress you hoped for. There are four steps and you'll probably need to spend about five minutes on each stage.

Step 1: Remind Yourself What the Goal Is

My goal is ...
.....
.....
.....

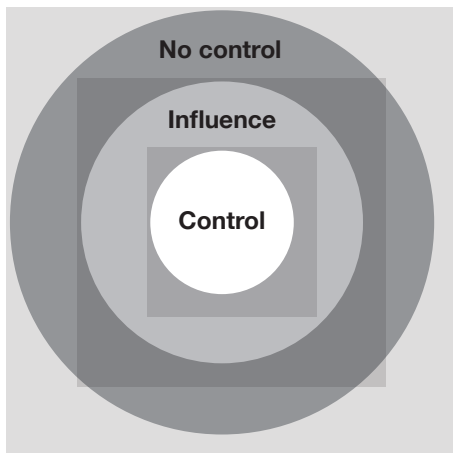
I know I will have achieved the goal when ...
.....
.....
.....

I should have the goal completed by ...
.....

Step 2: Circles of Control

For step 2 you need some sticky notes. Write down all the obstacles you can think of on separate notes, one for each obstacle. Just keep writing and think of as many obstacles that you can. The next step is to place them on the circles of control diagram below. This is how it works. Take each sticky note and first ask yourself, how much control do I have over this? Is it no control – there is nothing you can do about it (e.g. external factors such as ill health or family problems)? Or could you influence the obstacle – it might appear out of your control but there are some things that you could do to make it better? Finally, is this something that is in your control (e.g. you might not have been working hard enough but you know there aren't really any excuses for this)?

Circles of control



Source: Covey (1989), p. 82.

When you've decided where to place your sticky notes, it's sometimes useful to share your thoughts with another person, if you feel comfortable doing so. Sometimes we can believe we have no control when in fact we do. Getting a different perspective can sometimes help with this.

Step 3: Rate Your Obstacles

Next, take the sticky notes that you can influence or control and place them in the boxes below. You need to rate each obstacle on a continuum from 'stops me a bit' to 'stops me a lot' – think of it as a 1–10 scale.

If all of your notes are out of your control, you will need to seek some external support. Arrange to see your tutor or a mentor and describe the task you've done.

Stops me a bit


Stops me a lot

Obstacle 1
Obstacle 2
Obstacle 3


March Activities

Stops me a bit


Stops me a lot



Obstacle 4



Obstacle 5



Obstacle 6

Step 4: The Action Plan

Now it's time to take action. Take the three sticky notes that appear to be stopping you the most and place them in the boxes below. You then need to answer the three questions on each obstacle and decide what action you're going to take.

Obstacle	What could I do to overcome this obstacle?	What options haven't I considered?	What actions can I take?
.....
.....
.....

Final Thoughts

For the first few times you use this tool it's best if you write the obstacles down. With enough practice you'll start to go through this process naturally in your mind. You'll find that with practice, rather than hitting a wall and suddenly stopping, you'll find a way around your obstacle.