**HAVING AN INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL**

One of the hallmark signs of addiction is that a person has lost power over their ability to stop using drugs or drinking. Typically, although it’s not true for all addicts, there’s a feeling of powerlessness that lives underneath an addiction. Powerlessness is a feeling, often an unconscious one, which leads to believing that power is outside of your control. In turn, a significant part of the healing that needs to take place in recovery is for someone to regain a sense of internal power.

Making the shift from losing your power to drugs and alcohol (powerlessness) to a sense of internal power can be incredibly healing. Powerlessness is sometimes also described as having an external locus of control. Your locus of control is what you deem to have power over the successes and failures in your life. Ultimately, an addict hands over his or her power to the substance or behavior he or she is addicted to.

Having an internal center of control means that you believe in your ability to have control over the events in your life, to the degree that it is possible. It is living life with a feeling of having command over the things that you are able to have command over. However, an external center of control leads to relinquishing self-control and self-determination to a power outside of you – and this is the disease of addiction.

Shifting from an external to an internal locus of control can play a pivotal role in healing. In fact, at the root of addiction is the attempt to gain something externally (through alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, or another source) that one can only acquire from within. Furthermore, men and women who are addicted to alcohol or drugs will tend to blame their addiction on an external source, such as a horrible childhood or an abusive relationship or the events of the past. An addict, in almost all cases, will believe that his or her addiction and problems are out of his or her control.

However, part of the healing of addiction is beginning to realize that whatever is happening in your life is under your control, for the most part. Once a person experiences this realization, he or she often begins to participate more regularly in their own healing. In fact, sometimes it’s difficult to accept that healing is the result of our own responsibility.

And, this is completely understandable because we are often taught to hand over our power to health professionals, giving in to that powerlessness again. We continue the behavior that we know so well – to let someone else who is more powerful, more knowledgeable, more able to get the job done, to let him or her do it. But the point of recovery is not only a physical healing; it’s a psychological healing too. It’s a healing of your empowerment, your strength, and your belief in yourself.