The Dichotomy of Control

> *"There are things which are within our power, and there are things which are beyond our power. Within our power are opinion, aim, desire, aversion, and, in one word, whatever affairs are our own."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 1 (tr. Higginson)

Write down the situation in one line. List everything about it that is on your mind, putting each item in one column or the other. Be strict. Other people's choices, the past and how you feel at this second all go on the right.

The situation

Up to me

My actions, my words, my effort, my judgements, what I do in the next hour.

Not up to me

Other people, outcomes, the past, my reputation, whether the urge comes.

Where my effort goes today

Pick one or two items from the left-hand column.

What I am setting down

From the right-hand column. Not forgetting it. Just no longer trying to carry it with will alone.

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

Thought Check

> *"Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of things."*
>
> Epictetus, Enchiridion 5 (tr. Higginson)

Write the thought word for word, as your mind said it. Then question it like a fair witness: is it true, all of it, every time? What is actually in your control here? Finish with a sentence that is honest - not forced positivity, just more accurate.

THE THOUGHT, WORD FOR WORD	IS IT TRUE? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?	WHAT IS IN MY CONTROL HERE?	A TRUER SENTENCE

Thoughts that often argue for a drink

"I deserve it." "Just one won't hurt." "I can't cope with this sober." "I've already ruined today." "Nobody would know." "It's a special occasion."

Which of these sound familiar? They are the habit talking, not the truth.

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

Rehearsing a Hard Moment

> *"Therefore, nothing ought to be unexpected by us."*
>
> Seneca, Letters 91 (tr. Gummere)

Choose one moment coming up - a party, a family visit, a payday, an anniversary. Write it as a short scene. Then rehearse your response until it feels familiar. This is preparation, not pessimism.

The moment

Where, when, who will be there?

What will probably happen

The offer, the comment, the feeling, the urge. Be specific.

What my mind is likely to say

The exact sentence that will argue for a drink.

What I will do and say

Step by step. Short and realistic.

If it goes worse than expected

What will still be true afterwards

Afterwards: how did it compare with what I rehearsed?

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

The View from Above

> *"Look down from above on the countless herds of men and their countless solemnities, and the infinitely varied voyagings in storms and calms."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 9.30 (tr. Long)

Write the problem at the centre as it feels right now. Then move outwards one ring at a time, writing a line at each. The problem does not disappear. It returns to its real size, and real size is easier to deal with.

What feels overwhelming right now

ZOOMING OUT	WHAT I NOTICE FROM HERE
This room	
This street or town	
This country, today	
A year from now	
A hundred years from now	

Back at full size: what is the one part of this that is mine to deal with?

One small thing I will do about it

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

The Four Virtues

> *"If thou findest in human life anything better than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, and, in a word, anything better than thy own mind's self-satisfaction in the things which it enables thee to do according to right reason..."*

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.6 (tr. Long)

For the Stoics, these four were the only true goods; everything else was secondary. Look back over your week honestly. Small examples count: a drink refused is self-control, a hard conversation is courage.

VIRTUE	WHERE I SHOWED IT THIS WEEK	WHERE I WILL PRACTISE IT NEXT WEEK
Wisdom *seeing clearly, good judgement*		
Courage *facing what is hard, honesty*		
Justice *fairness, kindness, putting things right*		
Self-control *moderation, delay, restraint*		

The virtue I most want to grow, and why

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

Who I Am to Others

> *"Consider who you are. In the first place, you are a man; and this is one who has nothing superior to the faculty of the will."*
>
> Epictetus, Discourses 2.10 (tr. Long)

Epictetus taught that our duties can be discovered from our roles. List the roles that matter to you. Be honest in the middle column, and practical in the last. This is about who you want to be, not about guilt.

MY ROLE	WHAT THIS ROLE ASKS OF ME	HOW DRINKING HAS GOT IN THE WAY	ONE THING I CAN DO THIS WEEK

The role I most want to grow into

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

Before I React

> *"The greatest remedy for anger is delay: beg anger to grant you this at the first, not in order that it may pardon the offence, but that it may form a right judgment about it."*
>
> Seneca, On Anger 2.29 (tr. Stewart)

Fill this in before you reply, call back or reach for a drink. Write the facts separately from the story. Then look at what is actually in your control, and what you would think about it tomorrow.

What happened - just the facts

The story I am telling myself about it

In my control

Not in my control

How will this look in an hour? Tomorrow?

What would the calmest version of me do?

What I will do now

- [ ] I am not going to drink over this
- [ ] I have waited at least twenty minutes
- [ ] I have spoken to someone, or will

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

The Person I Want to Be

> *"A man then must stand erect, not be kept erect by others."*
>
> Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.5 (tr. Long)

This is not a list of resolutions. It is a picture of who you are trying to be, so that in a hard moment you can ask: what would that person do now? Write in plain words, as if describing someone you admire.

AREA	HOW I WANT TO BE	ONE SIGN I AM LIVING IT
At home		
At work or study		
With friends		
With myself		
In my community		

What drinking tells me I am

What I know I can be

Three words for the person I want to be

One thing that person would do this week

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)

Worry Time

> *"What I advise you to do is, not to be unhappy before the crisis comes; since it may be that the dangers before which you paled as if they were threatening you, will never come upon you."*

Seneca, Letters 13 (tr. Gummere)

When a worry arrives, write it down in a few words and tell yourself you will deal with it at worry time. At that time, go through the list: is it in my control? If yes, what is one action? If no, can I let it be? Later, tick the ones that actually happened.

My worry time each day: _____ Place: _____

THE WORRY, IN A FEW WORDS	IN MY CONTROL?	ONE ACTION, OR LET IT BE	DID IT HAPPEN?

Looking back: what did I notice about my worries?

Free to print, copy and share · Not medical advice · Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland) · 988 (US)