

# Personal Control and Responsibility

How much personal control do you feel you have over your destiny? **The term *locus of control* refers to your beliefs about the relationship between your behavior and the occurrence of rewards and punishment.**

People are said to fall along a range between an external or an internal locus of control:

- **External:** Do you believe strongly in the influences of chance, fate or the power of others? **People who believe their rewards and punishments are controlled by outside forces or other people are said to have an *external locus of control*.**
- **Internal:** Do you believe that you are “the captain of [your] fate, the master of [your] soul?” **People who believe their rewards and punishments are due to their own behavior, character, or efforts are said to have an *internal locus of control*.**

Studies have shown that people who have an internal locus of control, that is to say, lower scores in the below exercise, are able to achieve more in school. They are also able to delay gratification, are more independent, and are better able to cope with various stresses. Some people may have both internal and external loci of control, depending on their situation.

## Who’s In Charge Here?

Are you in charge of your fate, or is a great deal of it influenced by outside forces? Answer Yes or No to the following questions to find out.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don’t fool with them?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Are some people just born lucky?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Most of the time, do you feel that getting good grades means a great deal to you?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren’t your fault?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough, he or she can pass any subject?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Do you feel that most of the time, it doesn’t pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning, it’s going to be a good day no matter what you do?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Do you feel that most of the time, parents listen to what their children have to say?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. When you get punished, does it usually seem it’s for no good reason at all?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Most of the time, do you find it hard to change a friend’s opinion?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Do you think cheering more than luck helps a team win?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible for you to change your parents’ minds about anything?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decisions?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong, there's very little you can do to make it right?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Are most other people your age stronger than you are?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding who your friends are?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. If you find a four-leafed clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with the kind of grades you got?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Do you feel that when a person your age is angry with you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Have you ever had a good-luck charm?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. Did your parents usually help you if you asked them to?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. Have you ever felt that when people are angry with you, it was usually for no reason at all?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen, they are just going to happen no matter what you try and do to stop them?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. Do you think that people can get their own way if they just keep trying?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. Most of the time, do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy, there's little you can do to change matters?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. Do you feel it's easy to get friends to do what you want them to?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. Do you feel that when good things happen, they happen because of your hard work?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you, there's little you can do about it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. Did you usually feel it was almost useless to try in school because most other children were just plain smarter than you were?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. Do you think it's better to be smart than to be lucky?

# Scoring

Give yourself one point for each item if your answers agree with the ones below:

- |         |         |         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Yes  | 2. No   | 3. Yes  | 4. No   | 5. Yes  |
| 6. No   | 7. Yes  | 8. Yes  | 9. No   | 10. Yes |
| 11. Yes | 12. Yes | 13. No  | 14. Yes | 15. No  |
| 16. Yes | 17. Yes | 18. Yes | 19. Yes | 20. No  |
| 21. Yes | 22. No  | 23. Yes | 24. Yes | 25. No  |
| 26. No  | 27. Yes | 28. No  | 29. Yes | 30. No  |
| 31. Yes | 32. No  | 33. Yes | 34. No  | 35. Yes |
| 36. Yes | 37. Yes | 38. No  | 39. Yes | 40. No  |

## Interpretation

*Low Scorers (0-8):* Nearly one student in three receives a score of 0-8. These students largely see themselves as responsible for the rewards they obtain or do not obtain in life.

*Average Scorers (9-16):* Most students receive from 9 to 16 points. These students view themselves as partially in control of their lives. Perhaps they view themselves as in control academically but not socially, or vice versa.

*High Scorers (17-40):* Nearly 15% of students receive scores of 17 or higher. These students view life largely as a game of chance. They see success as a matter of luck or a product of the kindness of others.

*Adapted from* Nowicki-Strickland Scale and results from Nowicki, S., Jr. & Strickland, B. R. (1973, February). A locus of control scale for children. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology* 40(1), 148-54.