AN ESSAY TO SHARE

Control or Empowerment?

A picture containing military uniform, military, person, clothing

Description automatically generatedChoosing a Lens for Decision-Making

An essay you can share or copy from and make your own

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# Two Lenses: Control or Empowerment

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Being human, we’re always viewing the world from a particular and limited perspective. Depending upon the lens we use, we’ll see things in different ways. ([The story of the blind men and the elephant](https://www.sloww.co/blind-men-elephant/) is a magnificent way to teach this point about perspective. According to the researcher at Sloww, the parable dates back to Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain writings with the Buddhist text Udana 6.4 containing one of the earliest versions of the story.)

When we consider all the many possible perspectives that lead to how people make decisions, one way to view them is to see them as falling into two general categories: coming from an angle of control or of empowerment.

And I always choose empowerment.

Let’s consider an example. Take this question: Do you feel there’s a limit to what an “authority” or teacher (of any subject) “should” speak to? Heck, we could change the question to be about what **anyone**should speak to.

I’ve found that such questions about what’s appropriate fall away in the light of empowering others.

So, in this example, I don’t mull over how I could create and enforce controls of who says what. Instead, I think about how we can encourage teachers to empower others, and how we can develop and encourage discernment.

In fact, those two intentions meld together because if teachers maintain the overriding intention of empowering their students, they’ll naturally be guiding students toward listening to their inner voice and, thus, students will naturally be refining their discernment.

# Principles of Engagement

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After seeing behavior in the wider world that I don’t agree with, I came to realize that often the fundamental difference in perspective is the control vs. empowerment lens.

Since I come from a lens of empowerment, I’ve come to a certain set of beliefs or principles that are the foundation for how I relate to others. I hadn’t ever written them down before, but thought that if I did, it might be beneficial to you. Whether or not you agree with all my points, seeing them in black and white might support you in clarifying or communicating your own beliefs.

I didn’t always have these beliefs, but over time, they came to be a part of my conscious decision-making.

1. **I see everyone as divinity in disguise**. This is fundamental to what I think we’re all doing here on this planet. I remind myself that everyone is a soul playing in embodied form. If I find myself judging someone or something, I remember that judgment isn’t wise, and when I find myself doing so, I remove myself from the irritating stimulus and go inward. Non-judgment is not the same as inaction. On the contrary, neutrality prepares me to be more clear-headed and effective.
2. **I don’t endeavor to control or manipulate others**. As such, I do not engage in telling others what they “should” do as that’s just one of the many ways to try and control another.
3. **I know that I have control over myself only**. I watch my mind for its patterns that want to change others and that cause me to feel triggered by others’ behavior. I define triggering as feeling excessive emotion that seems to be prompted by something happening in the outer world but that is in fact highlighting something inside that is unhealed. I don’t take action while triggered.
4. **I am passionate about sharing information for the purpose of empowering others**. I do not support withholding information for power or using knowledge for demonstrating superiority.
5. **I believe people who have knowledge and experience can be wonderful resources but that this does not grant them authority over others** and there are always unlimited potential sources that can be supportive, including the individual seeker herself.
6. **I don’t support regulatory bodies and broadscale efforts to “protect” us.** While I empathize with the good intentions behind regulatory bodies and all the many ways “stamps of approval” have been implemented to control the “quality” of a service, I have now seen all such efforts create more problems than solutions. I go into this more in the specific context of yoga teaching [here](https://yogateachercentral.com/free-yoga-teaching-resources/who-is-responsible-for-teaching-competency/).
7. **I avoid compartmentalization and favor holistic approaches** which mimic the nature of Life itself. So, if I pull something apart because it help to increase understanding, I always put it back together again and am open to absolutely any relationships the subject at hand has in Reality.
8. **I honor each person’s independent will.** I endeavor to minimize the energy of convincing although sometimes I am encouraging consideration of information that points to a certain perspective. For me, the bottom line is always that I communicate for the purposes of unifying, not dividing and see my mission or role is to empower others. I hope other teachers feel similarly.

# Yoga As a Model

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Yoga is such an eye-opener when it comes to the subject of empowerment.

Students don’t need to be convinced of anything to get benefits from yoga. They simply need to experience it. Good teaching, of course, helps them get even more out of it, but the point here is that yoga practice is empowering.

It suggests that all high-frequency teachings are holistic, like fractals, complete in themselves. Miraculously, such teachings are accessible to anyone whose curiosity and inner drive prompt them to try new things.

As such, yoga is an excellent model for moving away from top-down, authoritarian methodologies, hierarchical and compartmentalized systems, and excessively left-brained ways of thinking… and moving toward more balanced ways of living.

As a student of life, I have come to trust my own discernment which I experience as a combination of intuition and intellect. I take information that resonates and leave that which doesn’t. Since I can’t control others, I must rely on them to do the same, but whenever possible, I support others in becoming more informed and empowered.

What do you think?