# Locus of Control: Who's in Charge of Your Destiny?

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Locus of Control is a psychological concept that describes the extent to which individuals believe they can control the events influencing their lives. People with an internal locus of control believe they are the primary influence over their lives whereas people with an external locus of control believe outside forces such as destiny, people in authority, or chance are primarily responsible for the direction of their lives. However, locus of control is a continuum; no individual is 100% internal or external.

People with an internal locus of control:

- Take responsibility for their actions
- Work diligently to reach goals
- Are less influenced by others' opinions
- Often are more confident in their abilities
- Frequently achieve greater success in the workplace
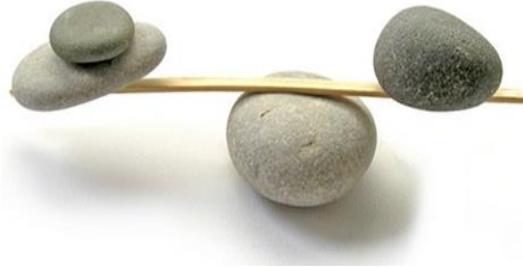
People with an external locus of control:

- Attribute their circumstances to outside forces
- Credit luck for their successes
- Do not believe their efforts can improve their situation
- Feel powerless in the face of difficulties

Studies have demonstrated that internally focused college students do better on tests and receive higher grades than their externally focused counterparts. In the workplace, an internal-focused individual will have confidence in his or her abilities to achieve goals and will work to overcome obstacles. If individuals feel helpless in the face of factors such as corporate decisions or the whims of the marketplace, they are less likely to work hard and chart their own course.

However, neither focus is inherently desirable or undesirable. An external focus can drain individuals of motivation, encouraging them to make excuses and blame outside factors for their failures. However, an internal focus can cause individuals to blame themselves for factors which are outside their control—thus creating stress and guilt. If a baseball player attributes the loss of a game to the team, he will experience less stress than if he believes his individual effort was responsible. Internals can also be afraid to trust others and surrender *any* control to another.

The ideal type may be someone who is "bi-local" and can accept that there are both internal and external factors at work in life events. Such individuals can accept personal responsibility while also having faith in outside resources. For example, a man who is dangerously overweight can accept his role in creating the situation while relying on doctors, nutritionists, and other experts to help him lose weight. It can take some introspection for some people to achieve the right proportions of internal and external responsibility, but ultimately achieving that balance can lead to less stress and more success. And isn't that what everyone is looking for?

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