



JENNY TRYANSKY
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COACHING

go inward. move forward.

How to Let Go of Control - Through Uncertain Times & Beyond

By Jenny Tryansky, CPCC, PCC - Jenny Tryansky Personal Development Coaching

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People cope with uncertainty in different ways. Some are able to embrace it very quickly and find the opportunities and gifts that turn the discomfort of uncertainty into a more positive experience. Others go right to catastrophizing and feeling out of control, which in turn makes them strive for any semblance of control they can tightly wrap their hands around.

Despite being a personal development coach committed to a growth mindset, I'm in the second camp. It's just how I'm wired.

Thanks to some solid tools I've found that anyone can use, I'm now able to recognize this 'wiring' – and the initial panic it perpetuates in the face of uncertainty – and create a more accepting and positive relationship with uncertainty.

Achieving this can be as simple as a shifting your language and perspective. When we let go of our need to control and instead shift our focus to what we can command, we open the doorway to navigating uncertainty more peacefully.

Uncertainty During COVID-19

This global pandemic has threatened our collective sense of control on a scale that feels overwhelming. Structures and systems have been severely altered. The things we rely on for consistency have changed. Without a clear timeline on when things may normalize, uncertainty abounds.

In the best of times, we tend to seek control in order to have a feeling of safety. Control is ultimately the ability to influence a desired outcome, or certainty. And the truth is, we have very little control over anything.

Think about it. Are you really able to steer most situations toward full certainty and a desired outcome? Too many external factors come into play to give any of us full control over most circumstances. Even when we have very precise plans and intentions in place, we can't control all the factors that influence how the situation will unfold.

Yet, we crave control. We tell ourselves that if we could have more control – over job security or our own health, for instance – we'd feel safer and more assured. We could relax more knowing things will turn out the way we want them to.



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The idea that control is within our grasp creates a false sense of security. Right now, during one of the most unpredictable, uncertain time in our history, those of us who normally strive for this (false) sense of security are often left feeling powerless and maybe even hopeless.

A few months ago, a friend of mine was let go from her job due to pandemic-related cutbacks.— This is a reality many employers are struggling with right now, threatening many employees' sense of security and need for certainty.

When my friend told me the news, I naturally went right to catastrophizing and offered comfort to ease the distraught state I assumed she was in. Her reaction really struck me. She admitted that she had a cry and allowed herself a short period to process her emotions around the news. But she said she was able to move to acceptance and opportunity quite quickly. She was already embracing the gift of more time to spend with her family and to focus on things she'd wished she had time for when she was working.

She told me that she's always been good at seeing silver linings; but this was more than that. She was able to let go of what she knew she couldn't control - the state of the economy, the ability for her workplace to keep operating at full capacity, what might happen in the future on a timeline that she couldn't predict. In letting go of control, she was able to embrace what was within her grasp: her attitude towards her circumstance; her intentions for how she was going to spend her time; and her ability to create a realistic plan for sustaining herself financially for now without making bold and fear-based assumptions about what the future holds.

From my vantage point, she was *in command* of her world and her life, even though she had no control over the external factors and wider circumstance.

Command vs Control

The pursuit of control is a topic that comes up often in my private coaching with clients. Many say they feel out of control, and they want more control over a situation, a relationship, their own thoughts or feelings. Or, they fear being controlled by another person or circumstance.

When the word *control* comes up, there's usually an intense energy around it, a tightness, a sense of striving that feels restrictive. I invite my clients to see what happens when they ditch the notion of control altogether, and look at what they can be *in command of* instead.

Often, that feeling of tightness eases almost immediately. My clients find relief in that shift in language when they realize that, while they lack control, they *are* in command of their own reactions, actions, attitude, emotions, thoughts and intentions. They see how and where they have choice and agency, despite their circumstances.



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When you seek control, you're focused on desired outcomes. When you shift to being in command within a situation, the focus shifts to you and your intentions rather than the specific picture of the outcome. You're able to let go of certainty and focus inwardly on how you want to steer yourself through the situation.

When you know you were in command of yourself through a situation and showed up as you intended, you're less likely to perceive the outcome as a failure or catastrophe even if it looks different than you'd envisioned. You can take pride in knowing how you navigated yourself through it.

Command like a Pitcher

This may seem like an exercise in semantics. To a degree, it is; to be in command insinuates a degree of control. But it's self-focused, and not as high-pressure as striving for control over the big picture and factors outside your grasp. It feels much more spacious, grounding and empowering.

I'm not the biggest baseball fan, but when I discovered that the terms *command* and *control* describe two different skills in pitching, it felt like a home run to me. I love [this explanation](#) from baseball analyst C. Sven Jenkins. He describes control as the pitcher's ability to *locate* his pitches and have them end up exactly where they intend them to - in the catcher's mitt. *Command* on the other hand, is the pitcher's ability to make the ball move how they intend it to move. A curveball will always curve if there's good command. The pitcher commands their arm and hand to throw a curve ball, and attempts to control its final destination.

Taking inspiration from this analogy in everyday life means understanding that we may not be able to control where things are going, how they'll turn out or where the end point is. But we can be in command of our intentions, and how we move through our lives and various circumstances.

When we choose command, we allow ourselves to let go of all the outside variables that *could* happen. We can still hope for a desired outcome. But we do so with the understanding that we're only able to command our own performance. There's confidence in that sense of command.

During these challenging and uncertain times, you can be in command of what you allow into your life and what you keep at a safe distance. Take comfort in that. Be in command of the things you can influence, and let go of the things you can't control. It's a game changer.

ABOUT JENNY



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Jenny Tryansky is an ICF-credentialed Certified Professional Co-Active Coach with a **whole life/whole person approach**.

In her private practice, she works virtually with clients around the world, specializing in working one-on-one with people who are driven yet highly self-critical.

She coaches clients to build meaningful, authentic lives, tackling personal and professional challenges with self-compassion and resilience, as they move forward toward their goals fuelled with confidence instead of self-criticism.

In addition to coaching private clients, Jenny is a writer, speaker, workshop & group leader and mindful self-compassion advocate.

She juggles life in Toronto with her husband and young daughter, and her work with clients around the world.

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For a **complimentary exploration call** with Jenny to determine if there's a great connection and fit, send her an email at jennytryansky@gmail.com or connect through her website.