

CONTROL • INFLUENCE • ACCEPT

The CIA Model

A practical way to direct your energy when work feels pressured or uncertain

The central idea: stress often intensifies when we invest energy in the wrong place. CIA helps us pause, locate the issue and choose a more deliberate response.

The three zones

Zone	What belongs here	Useful question	Response
CONTROL	Your behaviour, priorities, boundaries, preparation and next action.	What is directly in my hands?	Decide and act.
INFLUENCE	Conversations, expectations, working relationships, team dynamics and stakeholder views.	What can I shape, request or clarify?	Engage and influence.
ACCEPT	Facts, decisions or circumstances that you cannot currently change.	What reality do I need to acknowledge?	Release the struggle and redirect energy.

Why the distinction matters

Pressure is not always something we can remove. But we can reduce unnecessary strain by becoming clearer about where our agency begins and ends.

- **Trying to control what requires acceptance** keeps us fighting a reality we cannot presently change.
- **Accepting what we could influence** can leave important conversations, boundaries or requests unaddressed.
- **Staying in influence without acting** can turn reflection into repeated frustration.

CIA is not about becoming passive. It is about using energy intelligently acting where you have agency, engaging where you have influence, and stopping the costly struggle with what cannot currently be changed.

Using CIA in the moment

When a situation creates tension, uncertainty or frustration, use the following short sequence:

1 Pause: Create enough space to respond deliberately rather than react automatically.

2 Name the issue: Write one clear sentence describing what is happening—without interpretation or blame.

3 Locate it: Ask whether the issue sits mainly within Control, Influence or Accept.

4 Choose one response: Identify the smallest useful action, conversation or act of release available now.

5 Review: Notice whether your energy, clarity or next step has changed.

A simple CIA journaling practice

Choose one current stressor. Keep the writing brief and specific; the purpose is not to analyse everything, but to find a workable response.

CONTROL	INFLUENCE	ACCEPT
What can I decide, do, stop or prepare?	Who can I speak with, and what can I ask, clarify or shape?	What do I need to acknowledge so I can stop spending energy resisting it?

Worked example

Situation: A project deadline has been brought forward, and I am concerned that the expectations are unrealistic.

- **Control:** Review my priorities, identify the delivery risk, and prepare the facts.
- **Influence:** Speak with the project owner, clarify trade-offs, and propose a realistic sequence or scope.
- **Accept:** I may not control the final deadline or decision. Once my concerns and options are clear, I can focus on the agreed response.

One question to carry forward

“Is this something I control, can influence, or need to accept?”