

The Controllables

Curated by Simon De Los Rios

WHO IS THIS FOR

This practice is for anyone in a job search that is dragging on longer than they hoped, in a market where good people are hearing nothing back for reasons that have nothing to do with them.

PAIN

Measuring your worth by a response you do not control, and burning out from treating every rejection, or every silence, as a verdict on you.

SOLVES

Separates what is actually yours to control, your effort, your process, how you show up, from what is not, so you can keep going without the market deciding how you feel about yourself.

TOPIC

JOB SEARCH & INTERVIEWS

BURNOUT & OVERWHELM

READ TIME
2 minutes

TIME REQUIRED
20 min

WHAT YOU NEED
notebook, pen

BEFORE YOU START

My invitation, take some time for yourself. Put your phone somewhere else and avoid distractions. Put on music you like and if you feel like it, brew yourself a nice cup of coffee or a tea. And lastly, but most importantly, try to have fun... this must be an activity to be enjoyed.

Step 1: Separate what's yours from what isn't

List everything involved in your job search: the application, the follow-up email, the tone of your interview, the recruiter's response time, the company's hiring freeze, the sixty other candidates you never see.

- Of everything on this list, which parts did I actually have a hand in?

Step 2: Build your controllables list

From what's left, write the specific things that are fully yours: how many applications you send this week, how you prepare for a call, how you follow up, how you take care of yourself between rounds.

- What is one thing on this list I have been neglecting?

Step 3: Rate yourself against your own list, not the outcome

At the end of each week, score yourself only on the controllables, not on whether you heard back.

- If I only judged this week by my own effort, how would I score it?

Step 4: Catch yourself keeping score the wrong way

Notice the moment you start treating silence or rejection as a verdict on you.

- What would I tell a friend who got this same silence, this same no?

Example. Joe had been applying for four months. Good roles, strong applications, a few promising first calls that went nowhere after. Every week without a response felt like evidence that something was wrong with him. He built his controllables list: fifteen tailored applications a week, one hour of interview prep before each call, a follow-up email within 48 hours, and one real rest day with no job boards open. At the end of week one, three companies never replied. He almost let that define the week, until he checked his own list instead. Fifteen applications sent, every prep session done, every follow-up out on time. By his own measure, it was a good week. The job offer came two months later, from a company that took seven weeks to even schedule the first call.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS

The market is going to do what it does. Your job is to keep your own scorecard honest, not to make the market's silence mean something about you.

CONTINUE WITH

The Inner Critic, when the voice telling you something is wrong with you gets loud, this practice helps you separate what it is saying from what is actually true.

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Source: SDLR (original)