

Let it go | Christin Smith Myers

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Do you have a "let go" list? A place to record the slights and frustrations that somehow seem to steal too much of your attention? Think about how much time you spend each day focusing on (or, admit it, obsessing about) those things you cannot change. Chances are, more than you can afford to. One of the best time management strategies I know is to focus only on what you can control. And what about those things you can't control? Write them down to acknowledge them and then let them go.

One of my favorite children's books, [Zen Shorts by Jon J. Muth](#), includes a story called *A Heavy Load* that illustrates the predicament of holding on to something outside of your control:

Two traveling monks reached a town where there was a young woman waiting to step out of her sedan chair. The rains had made deep puddles and she couldn't step across without spoiling her silken robes. She stood there, looking very cross and impatient. She was scolding her attendants. They had nowhere to place the packages they held for her, so they couldn't help her across the puddle.

The younger monk noticed the woman, said nothing, and walked by. The older monk quickly picked her up and put her on his back, transported her across the water, and put her down on the other side. She didn't thank the older monk, she just shoved him out of the way and departed.

As they continued on their way, the young monk was brooding and preoccupied. After several hours, unable to hold his silence, he spoke out. "That woman back there was very selfish and rude, but you picked her up on your back and carried her! Then she didn't even thank you!"

"I set the woman down hours ago," the older monk replied. "Why are you still carrying her?"

Wow. How often do we do exactly what the young monk in the story did? Carry the frustration of a perceived injustice with us throughout the day - and sometimes far longer? Holding on creates anxiety. Letting go creates freedom.

A while back I [made a list](#) of what I can and cannot control. (You can tell what was getting on my nerves at the time.)

- I cannot control: [Kids](#), [Husband](#), [Boss](#), [Clients](#), [Traffic](#), [Weather](#), [Politicians](#)...
- I can control: [What I eat](#), [Whether I exercise](#), [What I read](#), [What I listen to](#), [How I respond to all of the things I can't control](#)...

And now, most of the time, when I'm tempted to obsess over a negative experience, rather than ruminating over it or rambling about it to a friend who has better things to be thinking about, I write it down to get it off my mind, and I let it go.

"Let it go" is one of my [personal commandments](#) because I want to remember I'm far better off focusing on what I can control rather than what I cannot control. You are too.