

## Locus of Control

**Background:** Julian Rotter (1966) devised a locus of control personality test to assess the extent to which an individual possesses internal or external reinforcement beliefs.

A trait that has been reliably associated with the use of emotion-focused coping is locus of control. Locus of control (LOC) refers to an individual's beliefs regarding the sources of control in their life (Rotter, 1966).

The decision to employ a particular coping strategy is affected by one's perceptions of personal control over the stressful situation. In this regard, control beliefs can be seen as "preexisting notions about reality that serve as a perceptual lens, [determining] how things are in a given [situation]" (Folkman, 1984, pp. 840-841). Where an individual perceives a stressful situation to be beyond their control, they are more likely to utilize emotion-focused coping strategies; where the individual believes there exists an opportunity to alter the situation or the problem causing it, problem-focused coping strategies will be preferred. It is not surprising, then, that researchers have found individuals demonstrating a predominantly

External locus of control orientation more likely to employ emotion-focused, rather than problem-focused coping strategies, given that a perceived lack of control is integral to their cognitive schema. Conversely, individuals demonstrating a predominantly Internal locus of control orientation exhibit a greater tendency to utilize problem-focused coping strategies over emotion-focused coping strategies.

So, there appears to be a conceptual link between dissociation and certain emotion-focused coping strategies and External LOC orientation.

External LOC orientation is, in turn, linked to dissociativity in terms of their antecedents. Unordered up-bringing and parental rejection have been related to strong Chance and Powerful Others belief orientations. In particular, punishing and controlling parental behaviors have been linked with the development of Powerful Others while inconsistent and depriving parental behaviors have been associated with the development of Chance orientation (de Man, Leduc & Labreche-Gauthier, 1992). An explanation for these findings is suggested by Levenson (1981) who stated that "the absence of fundamental supporting behaviors [sic] [may foster] expectancies of an oppressive unordered environment" (p. 27).

This is interesting viewed in light of what is known of the etiology of dissociation. It appears that the development of both dissociation and an External LOC orientation are related to harsh, neglectful and disruptive up-bringsings.

Terry Pettijohn, the author of *Psychology: A ConnectText*, has developed the following test based on Rotter's original idea. Indicate for each statement whether it is T (true) or F (false) for you. There are no right or wrong answers. This survey will give you a general idea of where you stand on the locus of control personality dimension.

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Circle one answer for each question.

Question	Answer	
1. I usually get what I want in life.	True	False
2. I need to be kept informed about news events.	True	False
3. I never know where I stand with other people.	True	False
4. I do not really believe in luck or chance.	True	False
5. I think that I could easily win a lottery.	True	False
6. If I do not succeed on a task, I tend to give up.	True	False
7. I usually convince others to do things my way.	True	False
8. People make a difference in controlling crime.	True	False
9. The success I have is largely a matter of chance.	True	False
10. Marriage is largely a gamble for most people.	True	False
11. People must be the master of their own fate.	True	False
12. It is not important for me to vote.	True	False
13. My life seems like a series of random events.	True	False
14. I never try anything that I am not sure of.	True	False
15. I earn the respect and honors I receive.	True	False
16. A person can get rich by taking risks.	True	False
17. Leaders are successful when they work hard.	True	False
18. Persistence and hard work usually lead to success.	True	False
19. It is difficult to know who my real friends are.	True	False
20. Other people usually control my life.	True	False

Transfer answers to the Score Table below then add up the total of your responses.

Scoring

Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
T	5	5	0	0	5	0	5	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	0
F	0	0	5	5	0	5	0	0	5	5	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	5	5

If your total is between	You have a
0 - 15	Very strong external locus of control
20 - 35	External locus of control
40 - 60	Both external and internal locus of control
65 - 80	Internal locus of control
85 -100	Very strong internal locus of control

Are you in charge of your own destiny? Questions are oriented to reflect an internal or external sense of control over the actions and choices of an individual. Responses to questions with an internal focus adds 5 points. Choosing an external focus, or giving up control of your life to someone else, adds nothing