

**INTRODUCTION:** The desire to want our children to be happy and successful is very strong. When we let that desire go unchecked, we find ourselves working hard to control the outcomes in our son/daughter’s lives. We plan for them, intervene on their behalf, and even rescue them. Unfortunately, these well-intended parental behaviors often hurt our children. This activity is designed to increase your awareness of (1) any tendency you might have to control the outcome, (2) the lessons your son/daughter are learning/not learning as a result, and (3) the potential problems they will encounter in the future if things don’t change.

**STEP ONE:** Try to identify three times when you have tried to control the outcome of a situation. Here are a few examples to get you thinking:

- Threatening *severe* consequences in hopes they would not make a poor choice.
- Not giving the *appropriate* consequence because you didn’t want to rock the boat.
- Doing a task for your son/daughter that they should have done themselves.
- Coming in and rescuing them from the consequences of a poor decision they made.
- Trying to quickly solve a problem they were having to help them feel better soon.

**OCCASION 1:**

**OCCASION 2:**

**OCCASION 3:**

**STEP TWO:** For each example you listed above, identify the lesson you robbed them of learning as well as any unhealthy lesson you taught them in its place. To spark some ideas, here are some examples of unhealthy beliefs your son or daughter may have as a result of you stepping in:

- “If I don’t do the work, someone else will.”
- “Even if I make poor choices, things always work out in the end.”
- “Chances are, if I break a rule, I’ll get away with it.”

**OCCASION 1:**

*Robbed of this lesson:*

*Lesson learned instead:*

**OCCASION 2:**

*Robbed of this lesson:*

*Lesson learned instead:*

**OCCASION 3:**

*Robbed of this lesson:*

*Lesson learned instead:*

**STEP THREE:** List below some of the possible problems your son/daughter will encounter in the future if you continue to try and control the outcome.

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**STEP FOUR:** Going through this exercise can leave parents feeling both discouraged and determined (to change). Remember, all parents make mistakes. There's no better time to start correcting those mistakes right now. Take these insights and experiment this week with opportunities to let go of the outcome. Most people who try and control the outcome do so in many areas of their lives, so even though your son/daughter is in treatment, you'll still have plenty of opportunities to practice. Watch for those opportunities and choose to let go of the outcome. Record your experiences below, and consider sharing them on the Not By Chance website so others can learn from you.

