A sense of control of one's life is a very powerful and empowering feeling to possess. In our society which is traveling forward at a million miles an hour it is a feeling that is often lacking in our lives. Most things that are in the news today (rape, murder, assault, terrorism... etc) threaten our sense of control.

How can we fight against this problem of feeling a lack of control in our lives? There are several approaches to addressing this issue. First, we need to find out if we have an internal sense of control or not.

By taking a "**pop quiz**" we can test ourselves and find out how we think about things and if there are any patterns to out thoughts. Start by carrying a pocket notebook or PDA and writing down what you are thinking at 3 different points during the day. Answer these questions:

1. What am I thinking about?
2. Why am I thinking about this?
3. How does this make me feel?

When you ask yourself these questions jot down anything that comes to mind. At the end of the day review what you have written. Is there a common trend to your thought patterns? Do your thoughts reflect that you put limits on yourself?

How can you overcome a habitual thought pattern? You have already taken the first step: You have recognized the existence of that problem through your journaling efforts. Next, you must replace the unhealthy pattern with a healthy one. Depending on the unhealthy pattern you recognize it may be as simple as replacing an "I can't do this..." with a "Maybe, if I try real hard, I can do this thing or learn something valuable that will help me next time."

Or, maybe it's a "Every time I talk to so and so on the phone I feel bad about myself." So, by recognizing that some of your

friends or family may be bringing you down or limiting your personal growth, then you can either avoid them or confront them and encourage them to change their topics of conversation with you to avoid damaging your relationship.

How do you know if you are putting limits on yourself? One way is if you find that your thoughts contain a lot of absolutes: "I never can do this..."; "I always get this wrong"; "Everyone thinks I'm bad at..."

When your thoughts contain these self-limiting patterns it is usually destructive. Different people are different. They have different goals, different fears, different motivations and different life experiences. We see the world differently, so how can you know what everyone else is thinking?

By the same token, if you assume that you will never achieve something or never do something right then you're already programming yourself for failure. It seems that the least you should do is give yourself the benefit of the doubt and say "maybe today is the day I will achieve my goals."