

Alex Osborn's Control List

How the Control List Works

The Control List is a structured set of questions (guiding principles) designed to stimulate new perspectives. These questions guide individuals or teams through transforming, improving, or rethinking an idea. It serves as a practical coaching tool to help clients break out of rigid thinking patterns.

1. Put to Other Uses – Can this be used differently?

Idea Generation Questions:

- In what other fields, industries, or situations could this be useful?
- Who else could benefit from this idea, skill, or resource?

Coaching Questions:

- What hidden skills or strengths do you have that you're not using in your current role?
- If you had to apply your experience in a totally new way, what would it look like?

2. Adapt – What else is like this?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What similar solutions already exist, and how could you adapt them?
- How do other industries solve a similar problem?

Coaching Questions:

- Who do you admire for handling a similar challenge, and what could you learn from them?
- If you could borrow a strategy from another area of your life, what would it be?

3. Modify – Can you change something about this?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What happens if you tweak one element (e.g., color, structure, timing)?
- Can you change the rules or expectations to make it better?

Coaching Questions:

- If you could adjust one part of your current situation, what would bring the most impact?
- What small shift could make this feel more aligned with your values?

4. Magnify – How can this be expanded?

Idea Generation Questions:

- How can you make this bigger, stronger, or more impactful?
- If you had unlimited resources, how would you enhance it?

Coaching Questions:

- What would happen if you allowed yourself to think even bigger?
- How can you amplify what's already working well in your life or career?

5. Minimize – How can this be simplified?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What is unnecessary that can be removed?
- How can you make this more efficient?

Coaching Questions:

- If you had to simplify your current approach, what would you remove first?
- What's one thing you're overcomplicating that could be made easier?

6. Substitute – Can you replace something?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What if you replaced one element—how would it change?
- What if you swapped roles with someone—how would they handle it?

Coaching Questions:

- What's one belief or habit that, if replaced, could help you move forward?
- If you had to approach this challenge differently, what's the first thing you'd change?

7. Rearrange – Can you change the order or sequence?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What happens if you change the sequence of steps?
- What if you tackled the hardest part first?

Coaching Questions:

- If you could reorder your priorities, what would you put first?
- What's one area in your life or career that needs a new approach?

8. Reverse – What happens if you do the opposite?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What if you reversed the roles, expectations, or direction?

- What happens if you approach this problem from an opposite perspective?

Coaching Questions:

- If you did the opposite of your usual approach, what could you learn?
- How can you challenge your default way of thinking about this situation?

9. Combine – What can you merge?

Idea Generation Questions:

- What if you blended two seemingly unrelated ideas?
- How can you integrate multiple solutions for a better result?

Coaching Questions:

- What skills, passions, or experiences can you combine to create something new?
- How can you bring together different aspects of your life to feel more aligned?