

Control-It

Feedback



From the answers you gave, it seems that the Advice Monster persona that you know best is **Control-It**. (And cool blue is your shade. Nice choice.)

You're in good company here! There are lots of other people who are VERY familiar with **Control-It**.

Control-It is the slipperiest of the three personas. It stays in the shadows, and with a tone of gentle authority it's hell-bent on persuading you that you must stay in control at all times. It convinces you that everything is controllable, just so long as you're in charge. And of course, if you don't stay on top of things—everything!—then chaos will come, and we'll all fail.

But before we dig into the details...

Remember two things. First, this isn't The Truth. It's a short, fun questionnaire. It's like a funfair mirror: amusing and only partially true. Like all feedback, you get to choose what's useful and ignore the rest.

Second, it's meant to be helpful, not punitive. You might be tempted to beat yourself up a little. Don't. Just recognize that you (like everyone) has an Advice-Giving Habit, and then start doing the work to #TameYourAdviceMonster.

Prizes & Punishments

There are plenty of immediate benefits you get when **Control-It** is in charge. We can call these the "prizes":

- You feel like you're the "puppet master" controlling how things play out, a bulwark against the chaos of the universe.
- You get to set the rules of the game.
- You get to have the last say and the final decision and the controlling word.
- You get to feel like you're the most influential person in the room.
- You get to have the "high status" in the room, because after all you think you're the most influential person in the room.

But there's a price you and others pay when your Advice Monster has the reins. These are the "punishments":

- You carry a heavy burden, as you try to control everything. And you fail, because it's an impossible task.
- When you "succeed," you disempower others and keep them from learning and growing, and from increased autonomy, confidence and competence.
- You're exhausted, because you're holding on to everything so tightly.
- You protect everyone from the uncertainty of the future, but also the possibilities of the unknown, and of serendipity.
- You doubt others' competence, so you're never able to step away.

Future You

If you're up for calming down your Advice Monster (and I think you are), a powerful step is to understand that you can play a different game. The "prizes and punishments" above is the pattern for Current You. But imagine a Future You where things have shifted so that:

- You no longer feel the weight of having to control every situation and every person; and in fact can see how that's an impossible task.
- You add value by sharing your ideas, advice and opinions, but selectively, strategically and deliberately, rather than automatically.
- You allow people to take control, find their own challenges, and walk their own paths.
- You are open to and welcome the possibility and the potential of the future.

You break the dynamic of the overdependent team (formal or informal) who come to you for everything. You reduce the sense of overwhelm, by no longer feeling you're responsible for every answer. You find the opportunity to reconnect to your Great Work: work that has more meaning and more impact.

Tactics to Consider

Start by watching the video of me facilitating a process to help go deeper in understanding your specific Advice Monster so you can create some specific new habits. It's at www.MyAdviceMonster.com.

In the meantime, here are five things you can test out, as you seek to tame Control-It.

1. Notice who else around you has Control-It as their primary Advice Monster persona. Watch and notice the dynamic and impact of their conversations, so you can get a deeper sense of the impact of yours. (I bet somebody's coming to mind right away.)
2. Reflect on key moments of learning you've had in the past, moments where serendipity and a little bit of chaos helped shift your sense of self and increased your understanding and wisdom. Imagine if those moments were denied you by someone who's Control-It Advice Monster pushed them to "be helpful".
3. Practice sitting with uncertainty and ambiguity, rather than acting. When you feel it, see if you can take one, or two, or even three deep breaths before you act on it. Get better at noticing where and how this experience manifests itself in your body. What does it feel like? A mentor of mine once said the longer you can hold your breath as you swim through the waters of uncertainty, the more interesting a place it is where you'll finally pop up to take a breath.
4. Ask, "what was most useful or most valuable?" at the end of a meeting or conversation. That will allow you to see what matters to others and where they're learning. It will probably not be what you're expecting, which might make you question how useful your "control" actually is.
5. Practice saying, "I don't know." Even when you think you do.

Remember, advice itself isn't bad. There's plenty of times and places where your insights and opinions are exactly what's needed. It's the Advice-Giving Habit we're trying to break, so you can stay curious a little bit longer, and rush to action and advice-giving a little more slowly.

Don't forget, you're not just Control-It

Let's face it, you're an interesting and complex human being. Even though the strongest Advice Monster persona for you seems to be Control-It, it's most likely you have all three personas playing out with different people at different times. You might recognize these two characters...

Tell-It

Tell-It is the loudest and most obvious of the Advice Monster personas. It has convinced you that your job, the most essential way you contribute to those around you, is to offer up ASIA: Answers, Solutions Ideas & Advice. You need to have an answer—no, THE answer—to everything. If you don't, nothing will get solved and you've failed. It feels so true ... and yet, what a heavy and impossible burden.

Save-It

Save-It! cloaks itself in the garb of moral righteousness. It has persuaded you that your job is to rescue every person and every situation. This is how you're helpful. And indeed, if it wasn't for your vigilance and self-sacrifice, all would fail. (Also a heavy and impossible burden.)

That's it!

Thanks for supporting *The Advice Trap* and *The Coaching Habit*. And best of luck in the quest to #TameYourAdviceMonster!



Michael Bungay Stanier

PS – there are two things you could do to help me, if you were so moved...

Share your result on your favorite social media platform. That will help others know about the questionnaire, which will then help us build a more robust data set ... not to mention tame more Advice Monsters!

Consider writing an Amazon review of *The Advice Trap* and/or *The Coaching Habit*. It makes it easier for others to know the books are useful when they see your comments.