

Agency: The Three Mindsets

"To act for themselves and not to be acted upon" (2 Nephi 2:26) | LDS Doctrine + Psychology + Leadership

THE DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION

THE WAR IN HEAVEN: Satan's entire rebellion was about destroying agency
"Satan rebelled against me, and **sought to destroy the agency of man**, which I, the Lord God, had given him... I caused that he should be cast down." — **Moses 4:3**

2 Nephi 2:26: "Because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to **act for themselves and not to be acted upon.**"

THE CORE DISTINCTION:

AGENTS = Those who ACT

OBJECTS = Those who are ACTED UPON

We were designed to be agents. When we surrender agency, we become objects — fulfilling Satan's original plan.

TYPE 1: THE AGENT (Extreme Ownership)

"I can do all things through Christ" — Phil 4:13

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Believes they can accomplish virtually anything
- Moves heaven and earth to achieve goals
- **Never blames** circumstances, people, or factors
- Takes 100% responsibility for outcomes
- Sees obstacles as challenges, not excuses
- Internal locus of control
- Growth mindset

ARCHETYPE: NEPHI

"I will **go and do** the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall **prepare a way.**" — 1 Nephi 3:7

TYPE 1 LANGUAGE:

- "I choose to..."
- "What can I do about this?"
- "Let me find a way"
- "I am responsible for..."
- "I will make this happen"

TYPE 2: CONDITIONAL AGENT (Fair-Weather)

"I can do hard things... until they get really hard"

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Usually proactive and capable
- Handles normal challenges well
- When truly difficult: "It's out of my power"
- Conditional internal locus of control
- Growth mindset that reverts under pressure

ARCHETYPE: PETER

Walked on water — until he looked at the waves:

"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and **beginning to sink.**" — Matt 14:30

THE "I'VE DONE ALL I CAN" TRAP:

- "I've tried everything"
- "It's out of my hands now"
- "I can't control this"
- "There's nothing more I can do"

THE DANGER: Sometimes true. But often **premature surrender.** Type 1 asks: "What else could I possibly try?"

TYPE 3: THE OBJECT (Victim Mentality)

"I am acted upon"

CHARACTERISTICS:

- Blames external factors for everything
- Government, economy, parents, boss, "the system"
- Believes circumstances control destiny
- External locus of control
- Fixed mindset
- Reactive rather than proactive
- Has **given away** their agency

TYPE 3 LANGUAGE:

- "I had no choice"
- "They made me do it"
- "It's not my fault"
- "The system is rigged"
- "I can't because..."
- "If only..."
- "They won't let me..."

PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

JULIAN RÖTTER: Locus of Control (1954)

INTERNAL: "I control my destiny" — Higher achievement, better mental health

EXTERNAL: "Fate controls me" — Lower achievement, learned helplessness

CAROL DWECK: Mindset (2006)

GROWTH: Ability can be developed, challenges = opportunities, failure = learning

FIXED: Ability is static, challenges = threats, failure = defining

STEPHEN COVEY: Circles (1989)

Circle of Concern: Things you care about but can't control

Circle of Influence: Things you can actually affect

PROACTIVE (Type 1): Focus on Influence → it expands

REACTIVE (Type 3): Focus on Concern → Influence shrinks

JOCKO WILLINK: Extreme Ownership (2015)

- Leaders own **everything** in their world
- No bad teams, only bad leaders
- "Discipline equals freedom"
- When something goes wrong: look in the mirror first

KEY SCRIPTURES

Reference	Teaching
Moses 4:3	Satan sought to destroy agency
2 Nephi 2:26	Act for ourselves, not be acted upon
2 Nephi 2:27	Free to choose liberty or captivity
D&C 58:27-28	Power is in them — agents unto themselves
D&C 93:30	Without agency, no existence
Helaman 14:30	Ye are free , permitted to act
Alma 12:31	Probationary state — time to prove

D&C 58:27-28 — THE POWER IS IN YOU

"Men should be **anxiously engaged** in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For **the power is in them**, wherein they are agents unto themselves."

COMPARISON CHART

Aspect	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Identity	Agent	Conditional Agent	Object
Belief	"I can"	"Maybe I can"	"I can't"
Response	Act	Try, then quit	React/blame
Locus	Internal	Conditional	External
Mindset	Growth	Mixed	Fixed
Focus	Influence	Both circles	Concern
Archetype	Nephi	Peter	Laman

TRANSFORMATION PATH

Type 3 → Type 2:

- Recognize victim language
- Accept responsibility for responses
- Start with small choices
- Study 2 Nephi 2

Type 2 → Type 1:

- When "I've done all I can," ask "What else?"
- Embrace discomfort
- Develop growth mindset
- Study Nephi, Joseph Smith, pioneers

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. When something goes wrong, first thought?

T1: "What can I do?" **T2:** "Let me see if..." **T3:** "Why me?"

2. How do you talk about circumstances?

T1: "I choose to" **T2:** "I should/I'll try" **T3:** "I have to/I can't"

3. Facing major obstacle?

T1: "How can I?" **T2:** "Can I?" **T3:** "Impossible"

THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

2 Nephi 2:27: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh... And they are free to choose **liberty and eternal life**, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose **captivity and death**, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."

Agency is God's second greatest gift. Satan's entire rebellion aimed to destroy it. **Type 1 = Divine potential. Type 3 = Satan's plan. The choice is always ours.**