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PROBA

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EXTRAORDINARIA 2025

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**SECTION I: Read the text and answer the subsections a), b) and c).**

**Do you struggle to be in control of your life? It might be holding you back...**

My family was recently hit by a brutal stomach bug. It affected us one by one, which is common when you have a child in nursery. The intensity of the symptoms was shocking. Although I have recovered physically, I still feel powerless, having no control over my body. So, I have been thinking about control; how frightening it is to feel out of it. People often speak of feeling out of control – of their thoughts, their emotions, their relationships. This is a common topic in therapy, whether I am the patient or the therapist. The idea seems to be that, to build a better life, you have to be in control of it; the truth is, this desperation to be in control can destroy our lives and the lives of those we love.

In therapy, the need for control is not always openly discussed; it can be communicated unconsciously, for example, through a patient's late arrival, so that I, as the therapist, am the one having to wait, and they do not have to endure the feeling of being out of control of when the session begins. Or a patient might only talk about their diagnosis, like anxiety or an eating disorder, as if that is the end of it, instead of exploring their feelings. As we may imagine, there is a high cost to all of this. These costs are even higher in other parts of our lives. The constant search for control can make it hard to let others in, leading to loneliness. And we can trap others – our partners, friends, children – in our desperate need for control.

Why are we like this? I think we should go back to the beginning and the trauma of being born so incredibly out of control. Babies have no control over their bodies or their needs, which can be scary. No wonder they cry so much and so loudly. Loving parents try to help by responding to their baby's cries, but they can also feel stressed. Both babies and parents need to learn to be out of control. As a therapist, I have found that many symptoms are linked to this need for control and the belief that we should have it. It can show up in people who are controlling partners or those who end up with controlling partners.

The ability to tolerate not being in total control is essential to building a better life; actually, not just for children and parents, but for all of us. It can feel like being in or out of control are the only options, but that is not the case. In therapy, I have felt a sense of freedom where emotions can be understood, not controlled. The psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion described this state as "contained". He believed that loving parents help their babies by holding them and trying to understand their feelings. This instinctive gift helps babies eventually manage their own feelings. It is not about being in control or out of control, but about feeling contained.

Abridged and adapted from: Moya Sarnier (2024, September 23). Do you strive to be in control of your life? It might be holding you back....  
*The Guardian*.

**I.- a)** Answer 4 out of the following 6 questions according to the information given in the text.  
**Write complete sentences using your own words. Do not copy from the text.** (Choose 4 out of the 6 questions) (4 x 0.5 = 2 points)

1. How does the author feel after suffering from a stomach bug?



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2. Which are the consequences of the desperation to be in control?
3. How is the need for control talked about in therapy?
4. Why can birth be considered traumatic?
5. How does the author obtain a sense of freedom?
6. What does the author mean when she says that we should feel contained?

**I.- b)** Indicate whether the following statements are True or False according to the text. **Copy** the **part (and ONLY the part)** of the text which justifies your answer using quotations marks. (Choose 2 out of the 3 statements) (2 x 0.5 = 1 point).

1. The need for control is never discussed in therapy.
2. Some patients only describe their problems, without analysing their feelings.
3. Newborns are the only ones who need to learn to be out of control.

**I.- c)** Find the words or expressions in the text that mean: (Choose 4 out of the 6 questions) (4 x 0.25 = 1 point)

1. an illness which is caused by small organisms such as bacteria
2. weakened, without strength
3. to bear patiently
4. emotionally or psychologically exhausted
5. really, in fact
6. intuitive, unlearned, automatic

**SECTION II: Answer both subsections a) and b).**

**II.- a)** Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given in brackets. Do not change the word given and do not use contractions. You must use between **two and five words**, including the word given. (6 x 0.25= 1.5 points)

1. I have never seen such a beautiful sunset in my life. (EVER)  
This is the most beautiful sunset \_\_\_\_\_ in my life.
2. I am sure he did not mean to offend you. (CANNOT)  
He \_\_\_\_\_ to offend you.
3. I regret not helping my friend with her homework. (WISH)  
I \_\_\_\_\_ my friend with her homework.
4. They are building a new shopping mall in the city centre. (BUILT)  
A new shopping mall \_\_\_\_\_ in the city centre.
5. You must wear a helmet when riding a bike. (BE)  
A helmet \_\_\_\_\_ when riding a bike.
6. "I can finish the report now," she said. (COULD)  
She said that she \_\_\_\_\_.



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**II.- b)** In this text, fill in the gaps with the most suitable option from the four options given for each gap. (10 x 0.15 = 1.5 points)

Last summer, I had the opportunity to participate in an international volunteer program. It was an experience I had always dreamed of, and I was thrilled when I finally (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (**got / had got / have got / gotten**) the chance to go. The program took (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (**site / event / place / time**) in a small village in South America, where we were asked (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (**helping / to help / help / helped**) with the construction of a new school. The first few days were quite challenging. We had to (4) \_\_\_\_\_ (**got used to / be used to / get used to / used to**) the hot climate and the physical labour. However, we quickly adapted and began to enjoy the work. The local community was very welcoming, and we felt like we were (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (**making / had made / had done / doing**) a real difference. One of the things I enjoyed most about the experience was the opportunity to learn (6) \_\_\_\_\_ (**in / of / on / about**) a new culture. We were invited to participate in local festivals and traditions, and we even learned a few words of the local language. It was fascinating to see how different life was in the village compared to my home country. (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (**Often / During / Despite / Sometimes**) our stay, we also had the chance to explore the surrounding area. On weekends, we would often go hiking in the nearby mountains or visit local markets. The scenery was breathtaking, and I took many photos to remember the experience. However, not everything went smoothly. One day, I realized I had lost my passport. I (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (**must / should / mustn't / would**) have left it at the market where we had been shopping. Fortunately, a kind stranger found it and returned it to me. By the end of the program, I felt like I had truly (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (**grown / grow / grew / grown up**) as a person. I had gained a new perspective on the world, and I had developed a greater appreciation for different cultures. I also felt more confident and independent, having navigated life in a foreign country on my own. Looking back, I am incredibly grateful for the experience. It was not always easy, but it was definitely (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (**joy / pleasant / amazing / worth**) it.

**SECTION III:** Write a **composition** of about 130 words on **one** of these topics. **Specify your option.** (3 points)

1. Mental health issues are increasing nowadays. Many people argue that the main cause is the use of social media. Write a for-and-against essay on this topic.
2. In the past decades, psychological therapy was viewed negatively. Do you think this is still the case? Write an opinion essay on this topic.