I find the concept of mental control deeply fascinating. The fact that we have power over our own minds is deeply fascinating to me. So, for example, think of when you play ping-pong with your friends: you are tracking the ball through space, you are ignoring the conversations of your friends nearby, maybe you are even coordinating those conversations with the difficulty of play. So when it is easy you talk more, when it is hard you talk less. All of this you can think of through the concept of attention. So attention is this idea that you are able to prioritize some mental processing over other mental processing. It has become a hot topic in philosophy in the last 20 years or so (at least Western Analytic philosophy) and it has been a huge topic in psychology and neuroscience for at least 100 years before that. In this element what I do is I look at how mental control overlaps with attention and I contrast mental control with other nearby forms of control, like self control, a big topic in philosophy for a very long time. If you think of the marshmallow task, for example, this classic experiment where children are given one marshmallow and they’re told that if they can wait to eat that one marshmallow they can get a second marshmallow. That resisting of temptation is within mental control, that counts as mental control, but mental control also includes forms of control beyond that, like tracking that ball through space, focus. In the element I do that conceptual analysis work and then I apply the concept of mental control and attention to phenomena like meditation. Meditation is usually considered an exemplar form of mental control and attention but some have argued that you can meditate without control, without attention, and so I look at that evidence. I also look at mind wandering. Some have argued that mind wandering is a failure of mental control and attention, whereas others think that it’s not necessarily a failure of mental control and attention, and I look at evidence on both sides. Finally I look at ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and I look at how to define the disorder as well as certain paradoxes of the disorder, like that people with ADHD have an increased ability to hyperfocus. In the final section of the element I provide my own account of mental control and attention. You can compare it to this concept of schooling fish. So my account is what you might call an emergence-based account, in my account the whole of the brain activity is constraining the parts of the brain activity, similar to how you might think that the school of fish as constraining the individual fish in that school. So I hope that you enjoy this element, I hope that it is useful in your research and studies, and that you find these topics as fascinating as I do.