



CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

Students learn the Circle of Influence model as a proactive way to respond to challenging situations.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will consider how to use the Circle of Influence tool
- Students will practice using the Circle of Influence tool in their life

MATERIALS

Students will Need:

- Paper and Pen/Pencil

Teacher will Need:

- Online Learning platform such as Zoom
(Zoom instructions in orange, this lesson uses the breakout room and WHITEBOARD w/annotate features)
- PowerPoint PDF download

TIME

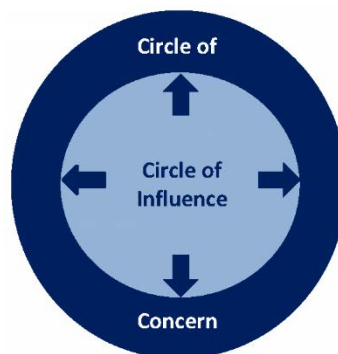
40 min

LESSON INTRO

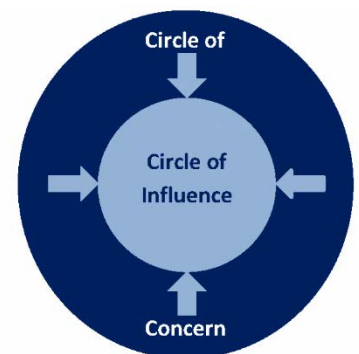
Circles of Influence is a great tool for resilience. Of all the good suggestions in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Habit 1: Be Proactive, is particularly useful when you feel powerless against life's forces. It can be helpful when you examine what you can do, instead of focusing on worries. The first step is to notice and recognize your concerns; second, among those concerns, determine what you can control or influence. These two steps lead us to creating the "Circles of Influence" model.

Each "circle" takes up space and energy in our lives. As we put energy towards our Circle of Influence, that area will grow, and your Circle of Concern will shrink. This is a proactive approach.

Vice-versa, as we put energy towards what is out of our control, we feel as if worries and life are constricting our agency. This is a reactive way of being.



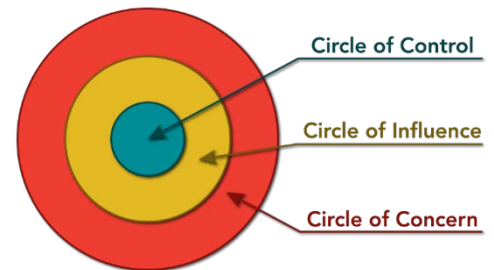
Proactive Focus
Positive energy enlarges Circle of Influence



Reactive Focus
Negative energy reduces Circle of Influence

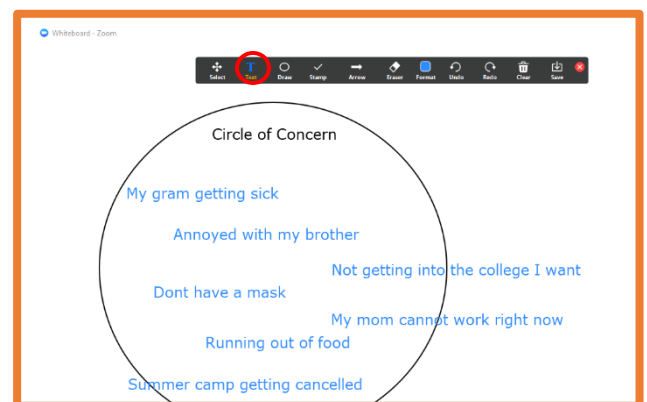
FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. The point of this exercise is NOT to prove anyone’s idea wrong. Be careful if you’re trying to convince a student that they do have control over something in their life. We do not know the complete picture and dynamics of a student’s life.
2. Notice the difference between the “ If only I had...” versus “I can be...” statements. Focusing on what you don’t like is disempowering, focusing on what you can do is proactive and empowering.
3. In more advanced models there is a third section of the circle, a breakout between the circle of control and the circle of influence. If students are struggling to place things squarely in one of the two sections—feel free to share this more nuanced model.
4. As with any tool that you introduce to students, the power lies in re-use and application at other times. Don’t expect students to suddenly use this model spontaneously. Follow up this lesson with an assignment to create a circle of influence for another area of concern.



LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Ask students to fold a blank piece of paper in half and have them draw two pictures: A picture of what makes a good day on one side, and a picture of what makes a bad day on the other. These should be ‘realistic’ days, not an ‘anything is possible’ day.
2. Spend several minutes having students talk through their pictures in breakout groups of two-three. **Use the Zoom breakout room feature.** This part of the assignment is meant to providing ideas and a framework for the main exercise.
3. Share with students that you will be working through a model that can help them be proactive in the face of life’s challenges (bad days, worries about COVID, conflict with others) they might encounter.
4. Ask students to spend 2 minutes silently writing down a personal list of worries or things they are concerned about during the pandemic, home quarantine, COVID-19, future plans, family challenges, etc...
5. Next, **screen-share the Whiteboard.**
6. **Create a large “Circle of Concern”.** Ask students to share out some of the items in their list. As they share, **use the text feature*** to record student concerns. **Each “concern” should be made with a different text box so that you can move them later.*
7. **Keep the screen share up.** Thank students for sharing.



8. Next, move the concerns* to the edges of the Circle of Concern so that you can draw a smaller circle inside the big circle.

*To move text boxes, you'll need to choose the "select" tool.

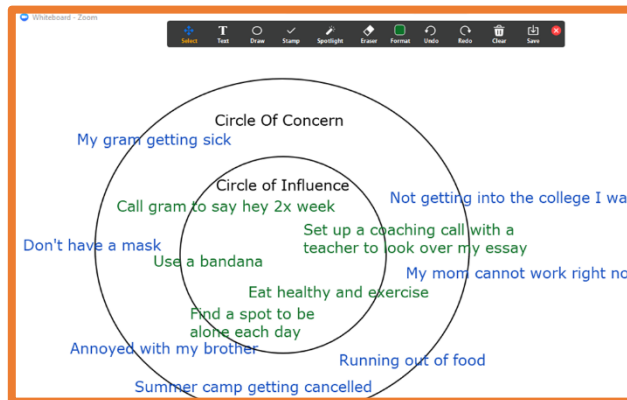
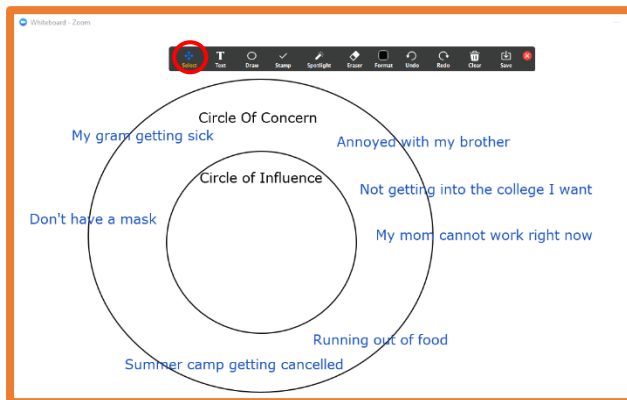
9. Share with students that smaller circle is called the Circle of Influence. Inside this circle are all the things you have control over or can do something about.

10. Ask students to share things that they can do to be happy/healthy/safe during the pandemic. Record their ideas into the Circle of Influence.

11. Next, have a look at what is in the Circle of Concern. Find out why these things are here. For each of these concerns, the aim is to find ways to 'bring them' into the inner circle.

- *What is it that you could do about this?*
- *Is there a way to improve the situation?*
- *Is there a way to re-think your perspective or attitude?*

You may not be able to bring each concern into the Circle of Influence, but what we are looking for are options for something that *can* be done.



It really pays to spend some time here. Go through each one and look to the students for ways to bring the concerns into the circle of influence. Keep going until you exhaust the options. It is surprising sometimes what options come up, even when we think we have exhausted them, if we just ask, 'What Else?' Use the knowledge in the room!

12. Eventually, you hit the brick wall and you will find that there are still some things outside of your control. That is ok, and normal!

13. You can save the whiteboard for future reference or to send to the students later on.

14. Screenshare the Circles of Influence model from the PDF PowerPoint.

15. Discuss how this model shows that **where and how we spend our energy can enlarge or shrink the circles**. Each circle, concern or influence, takes up space and energy in our lives. Where we put our energy will take up more space. Remind students that having stuff you care about, but which lies outside of your influence just feels bad! Explain that full Circles of Concern and tiny Circles of Influence feel terrible. Finding ways to make your Circle of Influence bigger, by putting your brain to work and thinking of the things that you *can* do - will make you feel better, happier, more motivated.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Ask students what they became aware of during the activity.
2. Ask students to commit to at least one action they can take in the next week.

3. Take a look at the good day/bad day ideas from the beginning of the lesson. Ask students if they can identify something from their bad day ideas that they could move into the Circle of Influence!
4. We all need to find ways of dealing with the reality of things outside of our influence. We can't stop it raining, but could see the rain in a different light?

Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor wrote *"Everything can be taken from a person but one thing...to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."*

Ask students to journal. Do you agree or disagree with Frankl's idea? How does it connect to the Circle of Influence model?

VARIATIONS

This lesson builds on the Good Day / Bad Day framework. You may find more relevance by building on another framework such as:

- Good Day at school/group and Bad Day at school/group
- Healthy Relationships and Unhealthy Relationships

NOTES

Source: This lesson was adapted from Steven Covey and *Then Somehow* resources

Educational Standards: CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Self-Management, CASEL: Responsible Decision-Making, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Flexibility and Adaptability, P21: Initiative and Self Direction, CCRS:SL2 Integrate and Evaluate Information, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence