



# CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE

*Learn the Circle of Influence tool as a proactive way to respond to challenging situations.*

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand about the Circle of Influence model.
- Students will practice using the Circle of Influence tool in their life

## MATERIALS

### Students will Need:

- Paper and Pen/Pencil

## TIME

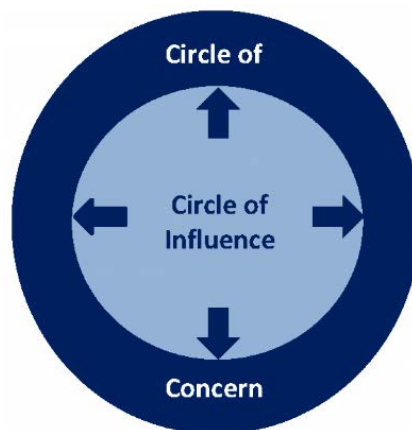
20 min

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## INTRODUCTION

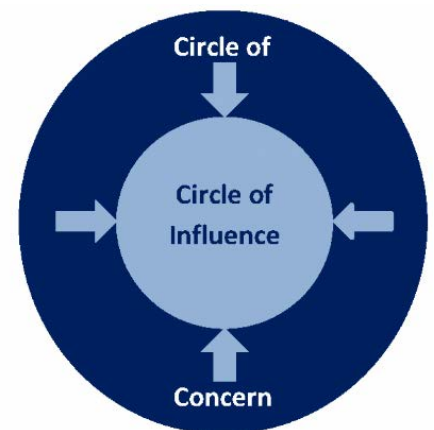
Circles of Influence is a great tool for resilience. Of all the good suggestions in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Habit 1: Be Proactive, is particularly useful when you feel powerless against life's forces. It can be helpful when you examine what you can do, instead of focusing on worries. 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

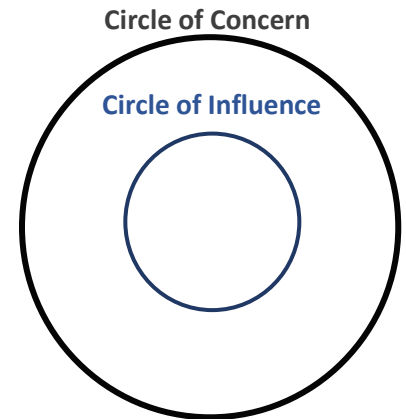


**Reactive Focus**

Negative energy reduces Circle of Influence

## LESSON ASSIGNMENT

1. Read the introduction to this assignment.
2. Spend about 5 minutes sketching two pictures: A picture of what makes a good day and a picture of what makes a bad day. These should be 'realistic' days, not an 'anything is possible' day!
3. Now, write 5-7 words or sentences that describe each of your "days".
4. You will be working through a model that can help you be proactive in the face of life's challenges (bad days, worries about COVID, conflict with others).
5. Start by drawing a big circle that fills up the entire page. Name this the "**Circle of Concern**".
6. Next, draw a circle INSIDE the Circle of Concern. Label this the "**Circle of Influence**".
7. **Around the edges of the circle**, in the Circle of Concern, write down any worries or things you are concerned about during the pandemic. Try to be as specific as possible about COVID-19, home quarantine, future plans, family challenges, etc...
8. Now focus on the Circle of Influence. In this circle, write down things that you can do during the pandemic to be safe, healthy, and happy.
9. Next, take a look at what you wrote in the Circle of Concern. Go through each concern in that circle and ask yourself if there is something that you can do about each one. Your goal is try to bring as many of your concerns into the Circle of Influence by identifying what you can do.



For example, you might be worried that your grandmother may get sick. You cannot keep her healthy, but you can call her every few days to check in and cheer her up! You might be concerned that people are wearing masks but you don't have one, check out online how to make your own. You may be getting annoyed with your younger brother. Try to spend some time walking to the park alone each day to clear your mind.

Keep going until you exhaust the options. Even when we think we have thought of everything, if we just ask, 'What Else?' we may be surprised at what options come up. Check in with family members to see if they have any ideas!

10. Eventually, you will reach the brick walls and you will find that there are still some things outside of your control. That is ok, and normal!
11. This model shows that where and **how we spend our energy can enlarge or shrink the circles. Each area, concern or influence, takes up space and energy in our lives, so where we put our energy will take up more space.** Will you spend energy on your worries, or on what you can do?

## REFLECTION

1. Look back at your sketches of good day/bad day. Can you identify anything from the bad day that you could move into your circle of influence?
2. 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."  
Do you agree or disagree with his idea? How does it connect to the Circle of Influence model?  
Spend 5 minutes journaling your answer to this question.

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