

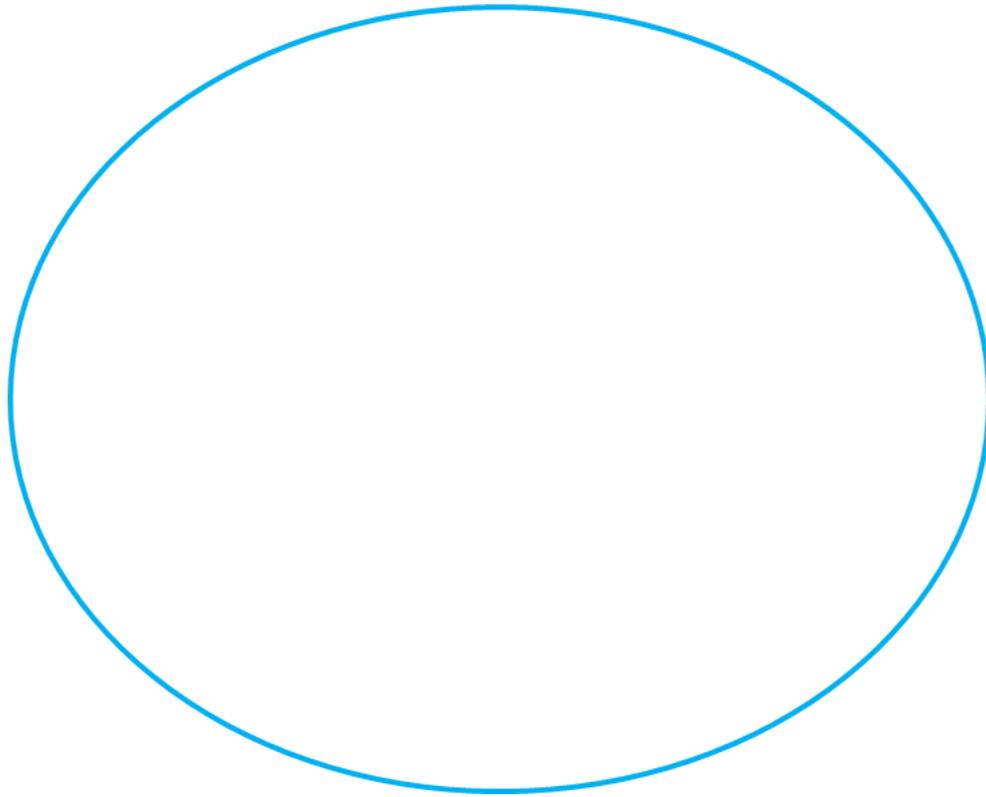
CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE:

"Happiness and freedom begin with a clear understanding of one principle: Some things are within our control, and some things are not. It is only after you have faced up to this fundamental rule and learned to distinguish between what you can and cannot control that inner tranquility and outer effectiveness become possible"- Epictetus, The Art of Living.

Remember yourself in situations which cause you stress, anxiety, overwhelm or bring conflicts. This could be whatever, starting from traffic jam, your kids not cleaning their rooms and your boss shouting at you, finishing with climate change and global economical and societal state.

Having these in mind, name and write down all those things in the circle below:

CIRCLE OF CONCERN



As you go through your day, there are hundreds of things that are outside your control, but which are capable of causing stress:

- you don't control the traffic jams, which make you late for work
- you don't control your boss's mood, which can upset your day
- you don't control the health of the economy, which has serious implications for your financial well-being.
- you don't control the weather, which can spoil your weekend plans.

Many of the things we try to control have to do with the way we relate to others. Often the more you try to control other people (your teenage child for example) the more resistance will follow.

It is amazing when you consider how much energy goes into trying to control what we cannot control. We say: "Why can't this person just act the way I want her to?" And we beat our heads against the wall, agitating about that. Or we're the guy in the traffic jam who keeps honking his horn, even though that doesn't make the traffic move.

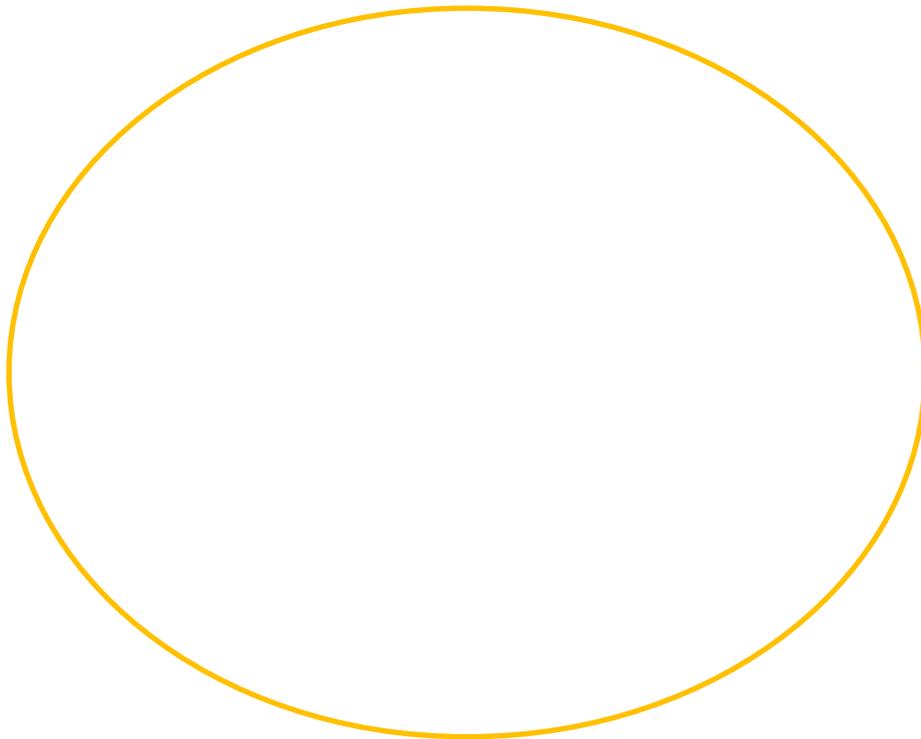
Choose any situation from your Circle of Concern and examine it from the perspective of the following questions. There is nothing wrong with letting humour be your companion.

Ask three questions in the following sequence:

1. What don't I control in this situation? (Make a list of everything that comes to your mind including other people's attitudes and actions.)
2. What am I currently trying to control? (Make the list of items that you are currently attesting to control even if those things are also in the list of the things you don't control)
3. What could I control that I'm not presently controlling? (Make a list of what you might control that you have not before considered. Often, these will show up in a flash of insight)

In the Circle of Influence write down all those things which you can either control or influence.

CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE



Your degree of proactivity can be assessed by realising how where you focus most of your energy, in the Circle of Concern, with all those things you can do nothing about. Or focus your energy, meaning acting upon those things you can have control over or influence in any way. Proactive people focus their efforts in the Circle of Influence. They work on the things they can do something about. The nature of their energy is positive, enlarging and magnifying, causing their Circle of Influence to increase.

Reactive people, on the other hand, focus their efforts in the Circle of Concern. Their focus results in blaming and accusing attitudes, reactive language and increased feelings of victimisation. The negative energy generated by that focus, combined with neglect in areas they could do something about, causes their Circle of Influence to shrink.

When you place your focus on what you can control, rather than what you can't control, new avenues open. You may be surprised to find that you then start influencing factors that you thought were beyond your grasp.

Resource: [Stephen Covey "7 Habits of Highly Effective People"](#)

HOW TO USE IN COACHING CONTEXT:

When your client brings to a session issue around stress, overwhelm or conflict, ask how they feel about doing this little exercise with you. Ask them to draw a circle and to write down all those things that contribute to their sense of stress, overwhelm or conflict, all what they feel concerned about in relation to their situation. When the circle is complete, ask them the same three questions that you were asked above:

1. What don't you control in this situation?
2. What are you trying to control?
3. What could you control that you are not presently controlling?

Then ask them to draw the second circle and write down all the things that they can either control or influence in relation to their situation.

Ask them to chose one in relation to which they want to take actions. Maybe they will choose to learn how to say 'no' to the things that are not important to them. Maybe they will choose to learn how to stay calm in traffic and use that time effectively. Or maybe they will choose to learn how they can give feedback to their boss, explaining how his/her raising their voice impact they way your client feels and how they perform as a result of those emotions.

Whatever they chose, help them to set a clear, positively stated goal and support them in creating options and actions to reach that goal.

We are wishing you impactful coaching!