

Circle of Concern and Circle of Influence

Adapted from The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey, Simon & Schuster 1992.

Application

This technique is good for separating out lower from higher priorities and gaining ownership for action. It is a really helpful technique to use to support your mentee in determining what they still have control over and can influence during turbulent times.

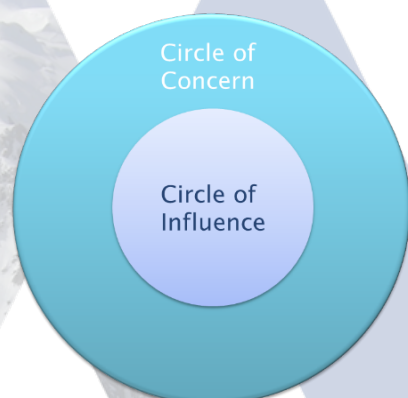
No concern



A **Circle of Concern** encompasses the wide range of concerns we have, such as our health, our children, problems at work, the amount of government borrowing, or the threat of war.

In mentoring, the outer circle represents the mentee's concerns. The mentor encourages them to record everything that they are worried about or feel they need to manage, from major issues created by the crisis to quite minor but continuous irritations.

No concern



A **Circle of Influence**, the inner circle, represents what the mentee can influence, either directly or indirectly. The mentor can ask questions to discuss the content of the circle of influence such as:

- What specifically can you do to concentrate on those concerns you can influence?
- What can you do to extend your circle of influence?

And for the circle of concern:

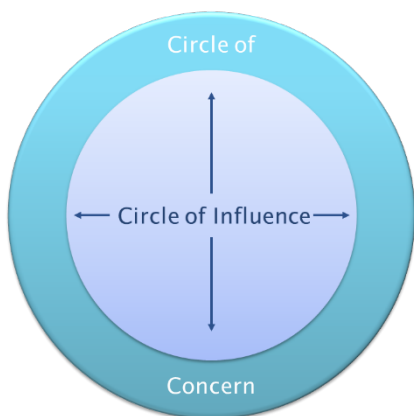
- How can you stop worrying about those things that you can't influence?

If the mentee then focuses their energy on the areas that are within their circle of influence and control, they will increase their capacity for influence: the more influence they effectively exercise, the more influence they will have. If the mentee purely focuses on the circle of influence for a few weeks they will find that many of their concerns disappear as they are rewiring their brains to think and focus on those areas they can have influence or control over and ignoring areas that they don't have influence or control over.

It is a great technique for empowering mentees during turbulent times as it helps them to feel more in control of their lives.

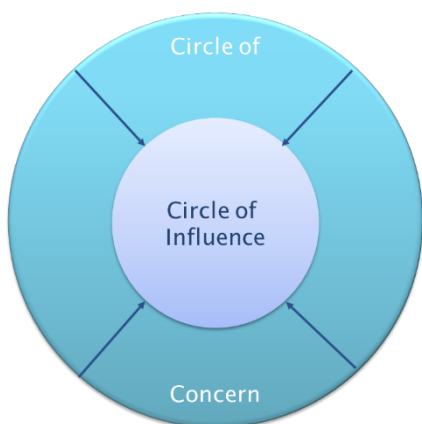
Stephen Covey also looks at how reactive and proactive people's circles of concern and influence differ. He defines **proactive** as "being responsible for our own lives...our behaviour is a function of our decisions, not our conditions.

No concern



Proactive people focus on issues within their circle of influence. They work on things they can do something about. The nature of their energy in doing this is positive, enlarging and magnifying. They increase their Circle of Influence.

Circle of Concern



Reactive people tend to neglect those issues that are under their control and influence. Their focus is elsewhere and their Circle of Influence shrinks