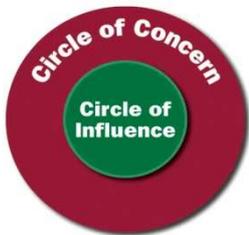


Maintaining Focus on Things Over Which I Have Control

There are many things happening in our own small worlds and in the wider world that we may be concerned about, such as whether our children's school is doing a good job of educating them, whether it will rain on the day of our birthday outing, or whether we can solve global warming.

We may worry away at these things, but worry doesn't help us. Nor does moaning about it to friends and colleagues – nothing will change unless we decide to be proactive. As Goethe said, "Insanity is doing the same things and expecting different results."

What does help us is working out what we can do about any of these things. If we're worried about the weather, we cannot change that, so there is no point wasting energy worrying about it. But we could make sure we take an umbrella. That's in our circle of influence.



We may not be able to change global warming overnight on our own, but we can make changes in our own lives so that we are not part of the problem. Again, rather than simply worrying about it, we make choices about what we will do about it.

This gives us a sense of control in our lives and gives us more confidence that we can have an influence. With this confidence, our circle of influence becomes bigger still, expanding into our circle of concern in a way that gives us even more control.

(Stephen Covey)

How does this apply to our working world?

- What is in your circle of concern at work?
- What can you do within your circle of influence to have an effect on that concern?
- Of those options, what will you choose to do?
- What points in your circle of concern will you choose to let go of?

Think seriously about this and come up with as many positive actions as you can. Too often, we say we cannot do something because someone wouldn't approve. But if you are that concerned about it, you will work out what constructive action to take. If you are not that concerned about it, then stop worrying about it and get on with the work.

This exercise can be particularly helpful when you are going through change. It's at times like these that we suddenly feel as though things have been taken out of our control, and that they are being done to us. So, we have many things in our circle of concern. The way to regain a sense of control is to identify what we can do proactively to move ourselves and the business forward. Change isn't going to go away (and will only get faster), so this can be a way to help ourselves to work through it constructively.

So, ask yourself, "how can I maintain focus on things over which I have control, to deliver business results with minimal disruption to my work?"