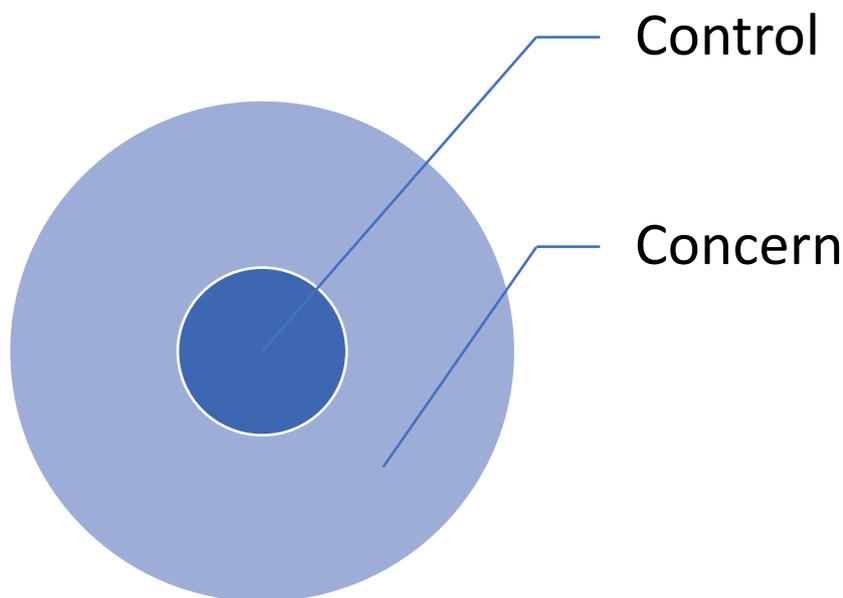


Circle of Control

Steven Covey distinguishes between two types of people: those who focus on the positive – what CAN be done, and within their control, and those who spend their time and energy worrying about things beyond their control. He called these two types of people proactive and reactive people. Proactive people adopt an attitude towards solutions and achievement, whereas reactive people tend to adopt an attitude towards victimisation and blame.

Covey uses a model to illustrate the difference between what concerns us and what we have influence over. He describes two circles. The first is your circle of concern. Concerns may be minor, major or anywhere in between. They include concerns over our family, friends, society in general, politics, the economy, global warming and so on.



The second, smaller circle is your circle of control. It is smaller than your circle of concern, and many of your concerns fall outside your circle of control.

The circles offer a guide to where to focus your energy when you would like to bring about a change in something that concerns you. If you focus your energy outside your circle of control, your capacity for influence will diminish, because you are wasting your time and energy on a concern over which you have no influence. Thus, your circle of control shrinks. It is tempting to focus our energy (particularly our mental energy in the form of worry, frustration, irritation and complaining) on those things in life that most concern us. But if we have no influence over them, that energy is lost forever and cannot be used to change areas of concern over which we do have some control. It can also make us blind to those areas of influence, as they are in the shadows of the larger concerns. This approach leads to ineffectiveness.

But if you focus your energy on concerns that are within your circle of control, you will increase your capacity for control: the more influence you effectively exercise, the more control you will have. Control breeds control. This is the core of personal effectiveness. Knowing how far your circle of influence extends is an important aspect of personal effectiveness. Sometimes you cannot have any direct influence over a concern outside your circle, but you can form alliances that can, or affect PART of the issue.

