CIRCLE of CONCERN & CIRCLE of INFLUENCE

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, refocusing and gaining ownership for action.

A *Circle of Concern* encompasses the wide range of concerns we have, such as our health, our families, our staff, problems at work, parents, the amount of government initiatives, or the threat of decreasing budgets. Within this whole universe of our concerns, there are some things we can influence and some things we can only stay concerned about.

A *Circle of Influence* encompasses those concerns that we can do something about. They are concerns that we have some control over. Now we have a choice about where we focus our attention and energy.
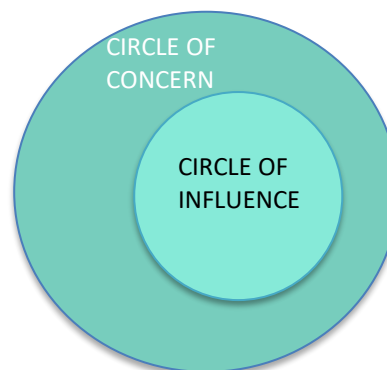
How does this work?

Stephen Covey defines proactive as "being responsible for our own lives.....our behaviour is a function of our decisions, not our conditions." Proactive people focus on issues within their circle of influence. They work on things they can do something about, not just trivial or immediate things, but larger issues that they can exert some influence over. In focusing attention and energy on the circle of influence, they become increasingly proactive. They don't waste energy on things they can do nothing about, but direct it towards what they can change. And they increase their Circle of Influence. Reactive people tend to neglect those issues that are under their control and influence, they get irritated about the shortcomings of others and apportion blame. Their focus is elsewhere and their Circle of Influence shrinks.

Identifying concerns

A useful way of determining which Circle people's are in is by listening to the language they use. Circles of Concern are full of "have's" while Circles of Influence are full of "be's". The table below provides some examples.

Have's (Reactive) **Be's** (Proactive)

When we **have** Ofsted, things will be easier	I could **be** focusing more on staff development...
If only I **had** an easier staff who weren't... If I had respect from...	I can seek out personnel and **be** able to understand... .. I can listen more
If I could just **have** more time...	I can **be** more organised / resourceful. I will be more diligent...
If the environment was more conducive we would **have** better results	Let's **be** more creative in how we do things