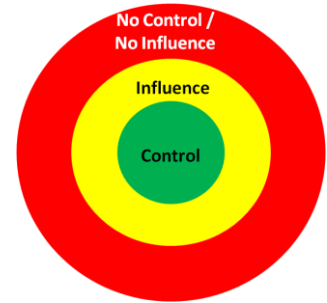


Circle of Control

When we try to create a new story, one of the most important things is to focus on the things that *we can control*. Too often we waste time and energy on things that are outside of our control and influence, when we could be spending it on creating our new story. In fact this, is why many people never create their new story—they are focused on changing the wrong things. We need to direct our focus on things we **CAN** control—things within our “circle of control”.

There are 3 levels of influence:

- Things that you can directly **control**
- Things you can **influence**
- Things that you have **no control** and influence. So let us look at those things.



Things you *can* control:

It's important to recognize that our *perception* of what we can control strongly influences what we do and what we feel about situations in our life. The perception of how much control you have in your life is called “Locus of Control.” *We've included a quiz that will help you identify how much control you feel that you have.*

A person who has a predominant **internal locus of control** believes that they can (or should be able to) influence *all* of the events and outcomes in their life. On the other hand, someone who has a predominantly **external locus of control** tends to blame the outside world for nearly *all* things that happen in their life. As you can probably see, being at the extreme end of both of these tendencies can have a negative impact on your life. For example, someone with a high internal locus of control tends to blame himself or herself, and beat themselves up, when something does not go their way, even if they had *no* control of the outcome. In other words, it is important to recognize there *are* things that we do not have control over. On the other hand, someone with a high external locus of control tends not to take responsibility for anything, blaming everyone else for things that are clearly within their control. They don't take control of their life because they do not think that they have the power to make the difference. People with a balanced locus of control have a realistic view of what they do have power over.

Below is a small list of things that you do have control over right now:

How much effort you put into something
How many times you smile, say “thank you”, or show appreciation today
How well you prepare for something
How you react to an emotion (yes, you have a choice—in fact, we made a whole course about it)
What you focus on
How you interpret a situation
What you commit to doing or not doing
What conversations you have and what you engage in
How much you focus on the present moment

What you tell yourself and how nice you are to YOU
How you take care of your body
How many new things you are exposed to
What you do in your free time
Whom you spend your time with and who your friends are
What information you consume: books you read, media you listen to or watch
When you ask for help
Whether you make plans and act on them
How much you believe what other people say
How long it takes you to try again when you fail

This is just a small list of examples. However, notice that all of these items are **DIRECTLY related to YOU**. Yes, YOU, your actions, thoughts, emotions, beliefs and choices are what are within your circle of control.

Remember that some of the things that you have control over have consequences, but those consequences do not take away from the fact that you have a choice.

What are things that *do* you have control over that you would *want* to change and take charge of?

How will taking control help you create your new story?

Things you can *influence*:

Outside of your circle of control, the next level is your sphere of influence. Our influence and perceived influence is critical to our wellbeing. In fact, researchers, Dr. Sommer and Dr. Bourgeois have been able to show that the more influential you feel you are, the greater your happiness and wellbeing. This is because feeling that we influence others gives us a sense of purpose, meaning, and control. Notice that influence is different than control. Influence does not mean telling people what to do or making them do something. That does not lead to happiness. And, the truth is that you CAN'T make people do anything.

There are two ways that you can increase your level of happiness when it comes to our influence.

1. **Increase your influence on others around you.** The type of influence we're talking about here is being a leader in our inner circle—meaning *leading by example*. For example, when we follow our dreams, stand up for what we believe, and when we grow, we empower other around us to do the same thing. It is about living in the reality that if you change your behavior, or attitude, other people tend to notice and are affected by those changes whether they want to or not.

2. **Increasing your *awareness* of how you currently influence those around you.** When you acknowledge the positive impact you are having on others, it boosts your confidence.

Influence is a normal part of human nature. It's up to you to decide in what ways you are influenced by others and whether you are a good influence on those around you. The sphere of influence goes both way because the people that you may have influence over also influence you. Choose who you are around wisely, and be aware of the impact you have on others.

Make a list of those closes to you whom you influence over and/or who influence you:

How do you influence them (both negative and positively)?

How can you become a better positive influence on them?

How do they influence you (both positive and negative)?

Are there any negative influencers that you can replace with positive ones?

Becoming a positive influencer will increase your happiness and wellbeing. Living your new story will serve as an empowering example for others. But, keep an eye out for the negative influencers in your life that may hinder the story that you are trying to create.