

01

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

When you face any situation you can think of it in two ways, a challenge or a threat.

This simple distinction will affect how much stress you accumulate and your reaction to the problem itself. For example, you can spend a lot of energy (and time!) dwelling on something you can't change, and this will often result in procrastination and anxiety from the threat. Instead, when you see a situation as a challenge, focussing on what you have control over and planning actions to overcome it, it helps your brain make new neurological connections to find solutions and reduce your stress, as well as perform at your best.

The first step is realising when you have really lost control and when you haven't. This exercise will help you see the wood for the trees, take action, and realise that even when you can't control what happens to you, you can always control how you react.

Spheres of Influence

WORKSHEET

This exercise helps you reclaim power and control in stressful situations, by moving away from blame and by taking responsibility for either our actions, or our reactions. At the end of the day, we all have a set amount of energy, the key is to spend it well. If you focus on either what's in your control or in your sphere of influence, and learn to let go of the rest, you'll feel more productive and ultimately happier too.

01

LET'S START! WRITE DOWN ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR STRESS AND ANXIETY:

This could be anything from work deadlines, worries, family issues, to losing weight, attending a medical appointment, etc. You can also use a piece of paper for this exercise, or print these templates.

02

FOR EACH STRESSFUL ITEM ON THE LIST DECIDE WHICH SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IT BELONGS TO, WRITE IT ON THE VISUAL ON THE NEXT PAGE, AND REFLECT ON THE NEXT STEPS:



COMPLETE CONTROL (GREY BUBBLE IN THE CENTRE): YOU CAN RESOLVE IT ON YOUR OWN THROUGH SOME ACTION, WITHOUT ANYONE ELSE'S HELP



PARTIAL INFLUENCE (GREEN BUBBLES AROUND IT): YOU CAN RESOLVE PART OF IT ON YOUR OWN OR SOMEWHAT INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME



EVERYTHING ELSE (ANYWHERE ELSE ON THE SHEET): IT'S NOT IN YOUR CONTROL AT ALL, THERE IS NOTHING YOU COULD DO OR SAY TO IMPACT IT DIRECTLY

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Example:

(1) Worrying that you have an upcoming presentation at work is something you have complete control over - you can plan your schedule to prepare the slides and revise.

(2) Concerned that your boss is overlooking you for a promotion? You can't control what your boss will do but you can influence this with good attendance, meeting deadlines, and quality work.

(3) Panicking over what questions you might get in an exam? You can't affect this at all, so focus on what else you have control over, i.e. your study efforts.

Within the same situation there might be things that go in all three categories. For example, if your worries are around wedding planning, make sure you use this exercise to split what you can and can't control. You can control what vendors you hire, how far in advance you'll send your invites out; you can influence to a certain extent prices, by asking for discounts, or checking that the venue has got indoor space should there be a downpour. But you can't control your guests' replies, a pandemic, or the weather.

The worksheet features a central circle labeled '01 control' and two smaller circles labeled '02 influence' and '03 everything else'. Each circle contains horizontal lines for writing. The central circle is light beige, while the outer circles are olive green.

01 control

02 influence

03 everything else

Spheres of Influence WORKSHEET

03

FOR THE 1S (COMPLETE CONTROL) AND THE 2S (PARTIAL INFLUENCE) WRITE DOWN BELOW WHAT ACTIONS YOU ARE GOING TO TAKE TO IMPROVE YOUR SITUATION. PICK ONE TO DO TODAY OR IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

01

ACTION CHOSEN:

BY WHEN:

02

ACTION CHOSEN:

BY WHEN:

FOR THE 3S (EVERYTHING ELSE), CHECK IF YOU COULD INFLUENCE IT IN ANY WAY (FOR EXAMPLE BY PREPARING A PLAN B). MOVE IT TO A DIFFERENT CATEGORY AND PLAN THE ACTIONS AROUND YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. IF THE ANSWER IS NO, CHOOSE HOW YOU ARE GOING TO RESPOND.

*I cannot always control what goes on outside. But I can
always control what goes on inside - Wayne Dyer*

