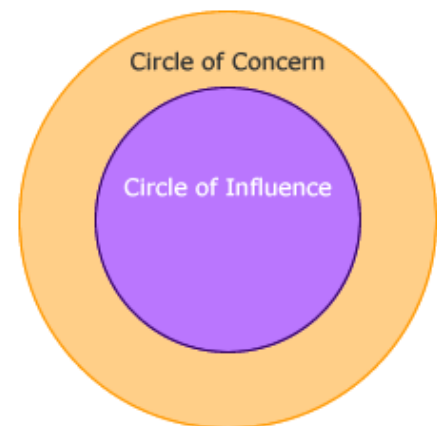


In Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* he writes about two circles which contain our lives, the Circle of Concern and the Circle of Influence.

- **Circle of Concern** — encompassing all the things we care about; ranges from our personal concerns (health, career, relationships, etc.) to our global concerns (global warming, war, recession, etc.)
- **Circle of Influence** — includes the things we have the power to affect; this circle is smaller than the Circle of Concern

The book goes on to show its readers how to be proactive and affect change by focusing their energies in their Circle of Influence.



The problems with Covey's Circles of Concern and Influence

We undercut our power and mistakenly place things outside our Circle of Influence

"The problems all of us face fall in one of three areas: direct control (problems involving our own behavior); indirect control (problems involving other people's behavior); or no control (problems we can do nothing about, such as our past, or situational realities)."

~ Stephen R. Covey

We have the tendency to underestimate our capacity to influence life, effectively placing things in our Circle of Concern rather than in our Circle of Influence. For instance, because we can't (most likely) solve global warming individually, we may abdicate the power we do have saying, "That's too big of a problem. I'm just one person. I can't change it." The truth, however, is that we can take action that does affect global warming, even if it doesn't eliminate it. ***Notice where you're unconsciously giving up your power to affect change by lumping issues into that place "out there" where you think you have no control. Then choose to take whatever actions you can to use your power as effectively as possible.***

We fail to focus more intentionally even within our Circle of Influence

"The proactive approach is to change from the inside-out; to *be* different, and by being different to effect positive change in what's out there — I can *be* more resourceful, I can *be* more diligent, I can *be* a more creative, I can *be* more cooperative."

~ Stephen R. Covey

The challenge in the Circle of Influence is to focus our energies, efforts, and power for the greatest effect. Even when we admit that we have more potential to influence life, that potential can go unfulfilled when we don't concentrate sufficiently. Covey writes, "At the very heart of our Circle of Influence is our ability to make and keep commitments and promises." I agree. In

fact, I see a third circle that moves as your focus changes. **This Circle of Commitment represents the area within your Circle of Influence where you are intentionally putting your time and energy (whether you do so for 10 minutes or the next year).** This circle symbolizes the difference between the statements "I can" and "I will." We each "can" do many things, yet only when we focus "will" we accomplish what we envision. ***Notice where you are not fully committing to the things you can do. Make conscious choices to follow through on your desires with action.***

