



Surfing the Waves of Life

How to Find Flow in Turbulent Times

Here is a “Circle of Control” exercise you can use with yourself when you’re feeling overwhelmed or can bring to your team. The following steps usually take 15 to 30 minutes.



the soul purpose

thesoulpurpose.com

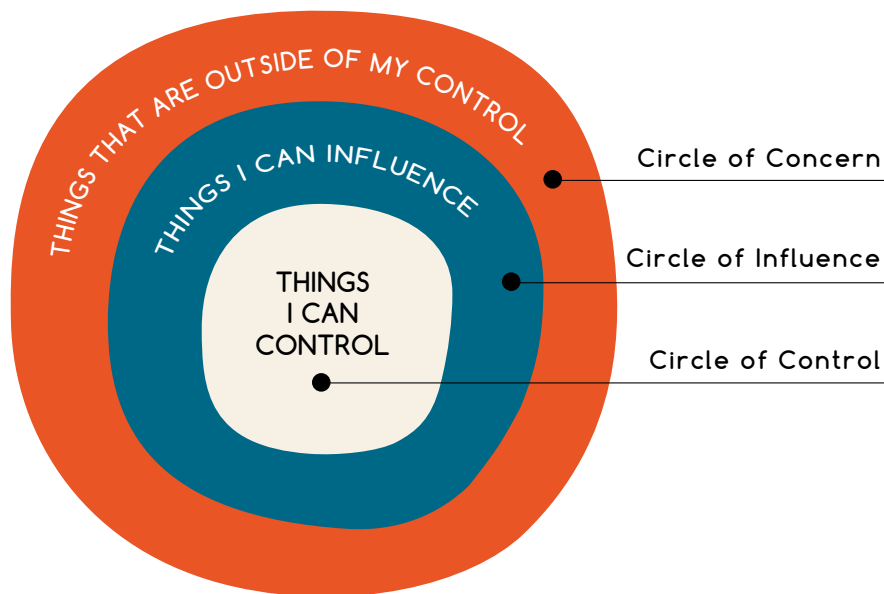
Start with a Check-In (to become present with yourself and/or others).

What two words describe my/your state of being right now?

Take a Breath (to tune into our body and hearts and soothe our nervous system).

Spend five minutes breathing in through the nose and slowly out the mouth, trying to extend the length of the exhales with each breath. Notice if you're breathing from your belly; if not, work to bring your breath there. You should see your belly expand and contract like a balloon.

Use the Circle of Control Model to Guide Your Process



Credit: *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* author Stephen R. Covey

● **Step 1 - Naming**

Think about some of your current concerns or stressors. Write them down—each one—on a sticky note or a piece of paper you can rip up and create into smaller ones.

● **Step 2 - Sorting**

Sort: Sort your concerns by ring.

Control: Which can you directly change (your response, communication, self-care, agency, creating boundaries)?

Influence: Where can you partially impact (team collaboration, work processes, supporting someone emotionally)?

Concern/Not in My Control: Things that are beyond your influence (organizational changes, severe weather, etc.).



● **Step 3 - Let Go of Concerns**

Ask yourself this question: What would it feel like to release these concerns and let go of the need to control them? Sit with that question for a few minutes. No need to write or chat; just imagine.

● **Step 4 - Rip, throw away, scratch out, and make no longer visible the items that are not in your control. Pause for a minute and see how you feel.**

● **Step 5 - Shifting Focus: Your Influence**

- Look at the influence circle.
- Identify one small step you can take to have a positive impact in this area. You can't control everything, but you can take one small step to improve it.
- Is there one way you could influence this area for a positive outcome while recognizing it's not entirely up to you?

● **Step 6 - Control What You Can Control and Act**

- Select one item from the control circle.
- Create a realistic plan for addressing it in the coming days. Make a short list of things you can do to act on this concern.
- Then commit: What's one step you can commit to in this area that aligns with your values and promotes your well-being?

● **Step 7 - Create Commitment**

I commit to (fill in the blank with a realistic action you can take).

By _____ (fill in the blank with a timeframe that's within three days),

I will _____.

● **Step 8 - Visualization**

Close your eyes and imagine yourself a week or a month from now, feeling more resilient, calm, and confident in your ability to handle life's uncertainties. Visualize a feeling of lightness and inner peace as you breathe deeply.



Additional resources

[The Science of Well-Being](#) (Coursera/Yale)

Articles

“The Serenity Prayer for Non-Believers” on Psychology Today

“[How to Practice Radical Acceptance](#)” on Verywell Mind

Ted Talk: “[How to Make Stress Your Friend](#)” by Kelly McGonigal

Books

[Radical Acceptance](#) by Tara Brach

[The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck](#) by Mark Manson

[Mindset: The New Psychology of Success](#) by Carol S. Dweck

[The Obstacle Is the Way](#) by Ryan Holiday

Articles

The Circle of Control by James Clear: A concise piece explaining how to direct energy toward things we can control rather than worry about those we can't. (jamesclear.com)

“The Power of Acceptance: Stop Resisting and Find Freedom” on Psychology Today: Covers the basics of accepting what we cannot change, with practical steps to focus on controllable aspects. (psychologytoday.com)

