

Using our Emotional Intelligence in handling trying times

“Everybody takes a bath”

Growing up in a family with 9 brothers and sisters was like experiencing a three-ring circus on any normal day in our home. On those especially challenging late summer days, I recall my mother calling us all inside and instructing us to take a bath and dress again for the day. At the time, I probably thought my mom was bonkers.



As an adult, and after hearing years of great story telling from my sibs, I learned that this was her way of restarting her day. Today we may call this a reboot. Imagine trying to feed, dress and entertain these many children?

What my mother was doing was demonstrating her emotional intelligence. She was focusing on what she knew she could influence and walked through the steps to allow her some semblance of control in her world.

Focus on what we can control

The lesson for us now is the same. We are deluged with many emails and messages around things over which we feel as though we have no control.

In my emotional intelligence classes, I share a simple model frequently used in leadership. We call it the ***“Sphere of Influence, Sphere of Control.”*** In this model, we discuss areas which we would like to influence as well as areas over which we specifically and realistically have control.

So, it works like this:

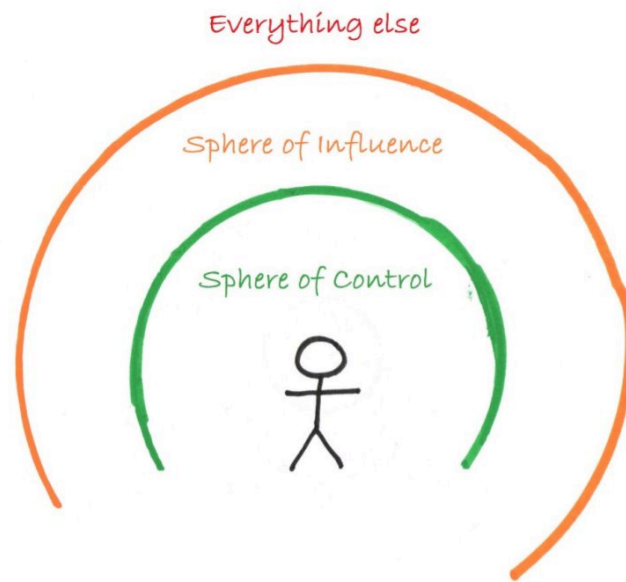
- 1) **Sphere of Influence** – Over what would I like to exert influence? Once I make this list then I often realize that although I would like to influence many of these desires, I may not exactly control all of the areas that influence this outcome.

2) **Sphere of Control** – Over what do I have specific and realistic control?

This can be an eye opener for some, and this is the area upon which we encourage our students to focus.

So, over what do I have control?

Because none of us have ever experienced a pandemic and climate emergency in our lifetimes, we may ask this question on a daily basis.



There are no experts or specific instructions we can find to guide us through these trying times.

For me, I like to get back to basics, learn from the masters in coping and resilience. If I am to take a clue from my mother right now, I think she might say, *'focus on things over which you have control and you may eventually influence other areas of your life.'*

So, what are those things? Well for now at least, this imperfect list has helped me focus.

Media diet – Limit to expert advice only. Limit to 15-20 minutes of only necessary; relevant and information specific to you and your world. <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Working from home – Take daily walks outside. Enjoy as much nature as possible.

Meditate – Finally download that app. (Insight Timer and Calm) and enjoy free guided breathing exercises.

Cancelled vacation and meetings – Call a friend closer to home and plan to go for a walk and talk.

Nervous about meetings at work and you still have to go – Invite everyone for a walking meeting.

Kids home from school – Ride your bikes to the park.

Maintain your sense of humor – Google a new joke and tell it to all you meet today.

And Wash Your Hands – Adorable 6 year old demonstrates advanced handwashing techniques. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/video/adorable-year-demonstrates-advanced-handwashing-techniques-69545402>

Practice Emotional Intelligence – Allow emotions to inform you without completely controlling decisions. Be aware that you are having a response, and then decide how to be healthy with that information.

And what about everything else?

Recommendation: let everything else take care of itself for a little while.

Would you like to add to this list? I would love to hear from you!



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