

To: Spring 2020 Restorative Justice Group #18

Title: *Being Proactive*

As time has passed since our group first met four months ago, we all continue to face new challenges, and with that...new feelings. Trying to figure out how to “do” each day and adjusting to these challenges, wherever we might be, is pushing all of us to dig in and learn how to lead our lives differently. This unique time has caused me to draw on some ancient wisdom (well, wisdom from about thirty plus years ago.)

Back in the late 1980’s, a self-help guru published a very popular book called *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Stephen Covey’s model included a group of attitudes and behaviors that can impact how we navigate our lives in more positive and productive ways. I found his book so compelling because it was a thoughtful way to look at my own behaviors, but it also gave me a vision for the future and where I might focus my energy. The seven habits that he focused on included:

- **Be Proactive**
- **Begin with the End in Mind**
- **Put First Things First**
- **Think Win-Win**
- **Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood**
- **Synergize**
- **Sharpen the Saw**

In order to build these habits, Covey talked about how to learn the *Skills*, increase your *Knowledge*, and find the motivation or *Desire* to do things differently. When these three areas intersect, you have the foundation for building these habits.

First, a little bit about what it means to *Be Proactive* (Habit 1). Being proactive basically means that as humans, we are taking responsibility for our lives and our decisions. We have the ability to choose how we respond to situations. Rather than blaming our conditions, physical environment or circumstances for how we behave, we recognize the power we have to behave based on what we value. Covey says, “Reactive people are driven by feelings, by circumstances, by conditions, by their environment. Proactive people are driven by values—carefully thought about, selected and internalized values.” He also encourages us to listen to the language that we use:

Reactive Language

There’s nothing I can do...

That’s just the way I am...

He makes me so mad...

I can’t...

I must...

If only...

Proactive Language

I can choose a different approach...

I control my own feelings...

I will choose an appropriate response...

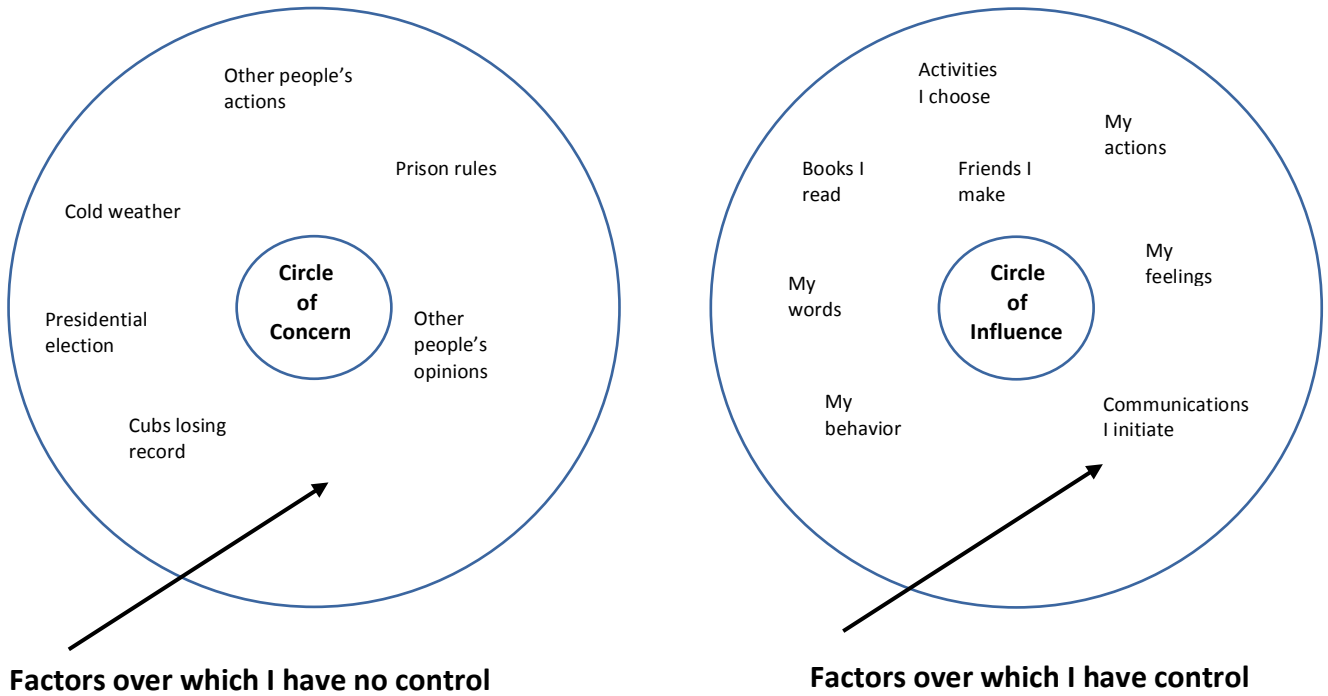
I choose...

I prefer...

I will...

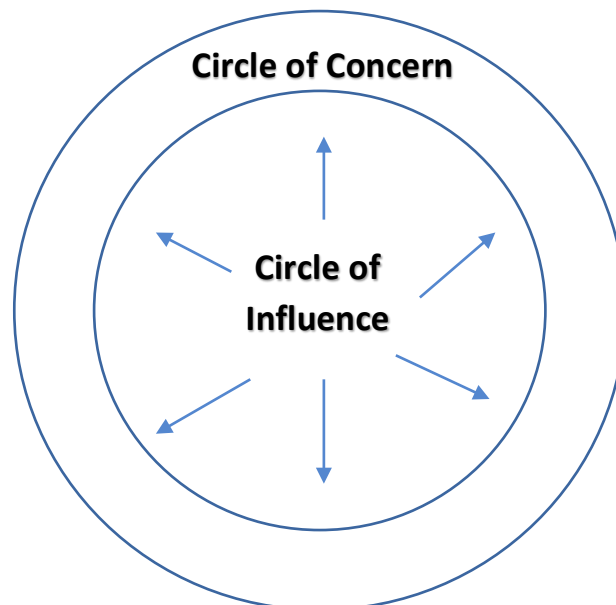
As I have listened to the men in the Restorative Justice circles develop greater self-awareness and describe the changes that they want to make now and the decisions that they hope to make in the

future, I am struck by another idea that Covey talks about with being proactive... the **Circle of Influence** and the **Circle of Concern**. Each of us has many concerns in our lives, some especially unique to those of you residing in a correctional facility. And, there are some concerns that we can do something about and others that we can't.



In order to become more proactive, it means that we have to grow our Circle of Influence. To do so, we work on the things that we can do something about. We focus our energy on being positive and enlarging our lives in ways that cause us to expand that Circle of Influence. For example, signing up for a group or class, or discussing a book with a friend, or connecting with a family member, or learning how to crochet, or choosing to not hang around with a negative person. Given our current pandemic circumstances, this is not easy, but none of us need to do it alone. Just talking about this idea is a start.

So, think about the circle below and what would you do differently to enlarge your Circle of Influence? I'm going to start this afternoon by writing a note to an old friend.



~ Ms. Caro-Bruce