

Spheres of Influence: Episode 290

Elena: If you are feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or powerless in the face of things you can't change, then this episode is for you. Hello friends and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each episode, you will learn how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change.

So today we're discussing a tool that can help you reclaim your energy, ground yourself in your power, and help your clients do the same. Let's get into it. Here's something I hear all the time from coaches and leaders. How do I keep doing this work when so much is out of my control? Maybe a teacher keeps missing deadlines.

Maybe your school or district keeps shifting priorities. Maybe you're watching your team burnout and you don't know how to help. Maybe there's deep resistance to equity work. Silence around issues that matter. If that sounds familiar, I wanna say this, you are not alone and you are not powerless, and this work is hard.

So today I wanna share a framework that has helped me again and again when I have felt overwhelmed. It's called the spheres of influence. This is a simple tool with a big impact. It helps you distinguish between what you can control, what you can influence, and what is outside of your influence so that you can spend your energy where it actually matters.

Let me walk you through how it works by sharing a story. I was coaching a teacher. I will call her Amina. And she was brilliant and passionate and deeply committed to anti-racist teaching and also deeply discouraged. She worked in a school with inconsistent leadership, shifting priorities and a culture of fear, and one day she said to me, I don't know if I can do this anymore.

I care so much. I feel powerless. So I asked her to pause. I grabbed a piece of paper and I drew three circles. One inside of the next, and in the center I wrote what I can control and in the next ring what I can influence, and in the outer ring what's outside of my influence. And then I said. Let's name what's weighing on you and let's sort it out.

So we started with the outer ring district policies, the principal's decisions, budget cuts, things that were completely out of her hands. Then we moved to

the middle ring. Her relationships with teammates, how she contributed to meetings, and how she could advocate for students. All things within her influence.

And finally, we focused on the center, how she designed her lessons, how she responded to students, how she took care of herself, and how she chose to show up each day, all things within her control. When we finished, she stared at the center ring for a moment and then she said, this is where my power is, and she sat up straighter.

She exhaled. She said, I've been exhausting myself trying to change things that I have no control over. This, I can do something with this. So that is what this tool offers. It's not a solution to all the problems. It's a way back to agency, and that is a pathway to resilience, something that every one of us needs in order to be able to navigate the challenges of this world.

So if you are coaching someone who is spiraling in frustration or maybe even just checked out because they believe that nothing they do matters, or if you've been there yourself, this tool can be a turning point. So here's how to use it. Grab a blank piece of paper. Draw three concentric circles in the center right.

What I can control in the next ring out, what I can influence and in the outer ring, what's outside my influence. Then choose a challenge that you've been facing, something that's been draining your energy and start sorting. You don't need to fix everything and you don't need to solve the system. You do need to see where your power lives, and this tool is so useful when used in coaching.

You can ask a client, can we explore what parts of this situation fall within your control? And that one question can change the tone of a conversation. Now if you want some more support in how to use this, then in the Coach Learning Library you will find a downloadable template, a protocol to guide, reflection, and a video demonstration of how to introduce the spheres of influence in a coaching conversation.

This is one of the tools that I return to again and again. Because it really helps people move from burnout to action. So here's a challenge for you this week. Try the spheres of influence exercise for yourself or with someone you coach. So name the situation, sort the circles, and see what shifts. And if you want to keep learning with me and build a coaching practice that is grounded in clarity, care, and purpose, then check out the show notes to learn more about our Coach Learning Library and PLC.



You will also find a link to our upcoming free community webinars there. Thank you for being here with me today and if this episode offered a helpful shift. If you're listening via podcast, would you share it with someone you know who might benefit and or hop over to Apple Podcasts and leave a five-star review that helps other people discover the show.

And if you're watching on YouTube and this sparked something for you, then give it a like and share it with a colleague. And if you're not watching us on YouTube yet, come over and join us. You'll find a link to our channel in the show notes. All right, friends. LesLee Bickford is the podcast producer and Stacey Goodman.

Does the sound engineering be well, everyone

