

What I can and can't control

Approximate time: 20 minutes

Materials: Large paper, pens and post it notes

Aim/outcome: To identify ways to look positively at challenging situations and minimise the negative effects of them

Explanation:

- On one piece of large paper draw a circle, that fills the whole sheet. On another piece of paper, draw a much smaller circle in the middle. Label the large circle 'what I cannot control' and label the smaller circle 'what I can control'.
- Explain that in order to help build our resilience, we should try to look positively at difficult or challenging things that are happening in our lives. While sometimes there are things we can't control, there are often steps we can take to reduce the impact of these challenging situations on our lives.
- You can give the following examples as some of the day-to-day challenges that they might experience:
 - The weather
 - An upcoming exam
 - Someone calling you names
 - Getting stuck in traffic on your way to school
- Ask the group to come up with more examples, and as they share their ideas, write each challenge on a new sticky note. Then go through the challenges, asking the group whether the sticky notes should be stuck in the 'What I can control' circle or the 'What I can't control' circle. For some of the more complicated challenges, you can question those they do have some control over by asking "Who is in control of that?" Continue this until you've arranged all the challenges in the two circles.
- Ask the pupils (in pairs or groups of 3) to pick a post it note from the 'What I can't control' circle. Ask them to think of an action they could take to make this challenge feel less stressful? They don't need to solve the whole problem, just think of ways they could improve the situation or take the first steps towards a solution.
- Some examples of solutions from the above scenarios:

What you cannot control: *the weather*

What you can control: *bringing an umbrella / coat / suncream*

What you cannot control: *The fact you have to do exams*

What you can control: *How much revision you do, whether you ask for help, study with friends etc.*

What you cannot control: *Someone calling you names*

What you can control: *How you react and whether or not you tell someone*

What you can't control: Getting stuck in traffic on your way to school

What you can control: Staying calm and relaxed and suggesting to phone the school to let them know.

- Encourage the group to come up multiple different potential solutions together. If they can come up with some solutions, move the post it on to the 'what I can control' circle. At the end of the activity the smaller circle should be covered in post it notes with solution ideas.

We can't always control every situation we find ourselves in, but in taking small steps we can always do something to help ourselves manage the situation. By taking positive action on the things you can control, you minimise the impact of things you can't control.