



Activity 1

In or Out of Control

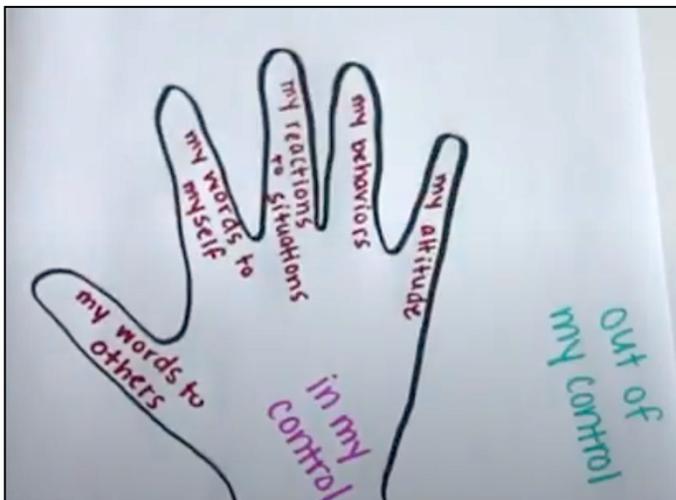
Objective:

- Help participants understand that they are not in control of, or responsible for, the behavior of others and must focus on what they can control. It is good to talk about both what is in and out of our control in order to help participants focus on positive outcomes instead of the trauma that they have suffered.

Steps:

1. Pass out paper and writing utensils to all participants.
2. Participants begin by tracing their hands onto the paper.
3. On the inside of the hand write, "In my control." On the outside of the hand write, "Out of my control."
4. Guide participants to write or draw the things that are in their control on the inside of the hand. They could write things like *my behavior, my thoughts, the words I choose to say, the words I choose to keep to myself, the way I react to others, etc.* On the outside of the hand, they will write things that are not in their control. These could be things like *my parent's job, my parents' divorce, the weather, my teacher's voice, the lunch my peer brings to school, etc.*
5. See the video below for an example:

<https://youtu.be/nxacynVqWd8>



6. Discuss the following:
"The hand is an important visual reminder of control. If something is in our hands, we are in control of it. For a concrete example, if you are holding a wadded-up candy wrapper in your hand, you are in control of the wrapper. You can choose



TRAUMA/TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE ACTIVITIES

to hold the wrapper, roll it in your hands, toss it in the trash can, throw it at someone, etc. If something is not in your hand, you are not in control of it. If the candy wrapper is on a table across the room, you cannot control what happens with the candy wrapper.”

7. If you want to take it further, introduce a visualization in which the things they want to control, but are actually out of their control, are falling through their fingers. For example, if you have a participant who needs to relocate, they can create a visual representation of their impending move. Help the participant to create a narrative: *“I cannot control my relocation. I CAN control my actions. I can choose to notice things that make me happy each day. I can control my actions.”*
 - a. Trying to hold on to something tightly that is truly outside of their control can leave them feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. It is hard to hold on to something that we have no control over. Visualizing themselves opening their grasp and releasing whatever that thing is can be a powerful way to relinquish the tension and focus on the things that are actually within their control.
 - b. For example:
 - i. I can control my breathing.
 - ii. I can control my thoughts.
 - iii. I can control my words to myself.
 - iv. I can control my words to others.
 - v. I can control my body.

NOTE:

For more information, visit <https://www.counselorkeri.com/2017/10/06/what-can-i-control-a-simple-visual-activity-for-school-counseling/>.