



Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day - Book Guide

Social Emotional Learning – Self-Control & Growth Mindset

Learning what is in our control and what is not in our control is an important lesson for individuals of any age. Use this classic children's book to introduce the circle of control and how we can use that to focus our efforts on what we can and what we cannot change. Also, dip into how to begin to reframe our thoughts and practice growth mindset.

- 1. Read Aloud.** Read *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst together. Stop every few pages to point out the illustrations and talk about how Alexander might be feeling. **Tip – If you do not have the book at home you can find the book on several “Read Alouds” on YouTube.
- 2. Talk about it.** As you read the book, instruct the listeners to think about each of Alexander's problems and whether the problem seems inside or outside of his control. You can stop after each page to discuss or wait until the end and go through all of them together.
- 3. Discussion & Reflection.**
 - *How do you know when something is in your control or out of your control?*
 - *Are there any problems Alexander had that you could relate to?*
 - *Were there times you would have done something different than Alexander?*
 - *What are things that have been worrying you lately? Do they fall in your circle of control or outside of your control?*
- 4. Growth Mindset Activity.** Growth Mindset is reframing the negative to make it positive. Growth mindset is all about attitude, which thankfully is something we can control (with some practice)! Growth mindset uses our understanding of neuroplasticity, our brains ability to create new pathways and learn new things, as a way to shift our thinking to more helpful thoughts. How can we change the way we think about things so that we focus on learning and growing from our experiences? Alexander is stuck on the thought that he is having a “terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day”. As you go through the book, have the kids practice reframing that thought for him everytime it comes up. Some examples to help you out might be – “Today is tough, but tomorrow is a new day”, “This is hard and I can make it through hard things”, “Next time I will do better”, “Next time I will make a different choice”, etc.



Thrive Therapy Houston, PLLC

www.thrivetherapyhouston.com | (832) 974-0153 | info@thrivetherapyhouston.com

CIRCLE OF CONTROL

THINGS OUTSIDE
OF MY CONTROL

THINGS I CAN
CONTROL



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Houston

CIRCLE OF CONTROL - ALEXANDER

Go through the different examples from *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible No Good, Very Bad Day* and sort through which category each example belongs to: "Things I can control" or "Things outside of my control". It can also be fun to use a hula hoop or a piece of rope in a circle as the "circle of control" and cut out the examples. Having the kids put each example either inside or outside of the circle is a great way to make it more hands-on and interactive.

- Sleep with gum in my mouth
- Trip on a skateboard
- No surprise toys in breakfast cereal
- Did not get a window seat in the car
- Someone did not like your picture
- Sing too loud
- Someone says that you are not their best friend
- When our feelings get hurt
- Say mean things to others
- Mom forgot to pack dessert
- Dentist found a cavity
- Door closes on your foot
- Fall in the mud
- Punch your brother
- Talk about what is wrong
- Shoes are sold out at the store
- Follow instructions
- Listen to directions
- Keep our hands to ourselves
- What mom makes for dinner
- What is on the television
- If the bath is too hot
- Where the cat wants to sleep
- Moving to Australia



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No surprise toys in breakfast cereal	Did not get a window seat in the car
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Talk about what is wrong	Shoes are sold out at the store
Follow Instructions	Listen to directions
Keep our hands to ourselves	What mom makes for dinner
What is on the television	If the bath is too hot
Where the cat wants to sleep	Moving to Australia

CIRCLE OF CONTROL – YOU & ME

Now that we have looked at examples from the book and talked through alternatives, let's look at the examples that fit for our lives and our family. Go through the different examples and sort through which category each example belongs to: "Things I can control" or "Things outside of my control". It can also be fun to use a hula hoop or a piece of rope in a circle as the "circle of control" and cut out the examples. Having the kids put each example either inside or outside of the circle is a great way to make it more hands-on and interactive. Add your own ideas to the blank cards!

- My choices
- Asking for help
- Following instructions
- Falling down
- Talking about how I feel
- Getting sick
- Respecting others' property
- Trying my best
- Mistakes I had made in the past
- The weather outside
- My behaviors
- My friend saying something mean
- Another person does not like me
- Apologizing when I am wrong
- My attitude
- School Rules
- What I do when I am upset
- Someone I love died
- My words
- Who I am friends with
- What I focus on



My choices	Asking for help
Following instructions	Falling down
Talking about how I feel	Getting sick
Respecting others' property	Trying my best
Mistakes I had made in the past	My behaviors
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