

Restorative Circles Booklet



**'The art of sharing power and responsibility
to create community.'**

Dominic Barter, Restorative Circles, 2012

The historical use of Circles

The symbolism of circles is ageless.

A circle can represent wholeness, continuity, universality, unity, inclusion, equality and protection.

The power within circles radiates out to all.

Using a circle formation as a means of social interaction is also historical and cross-cultural.

The North American medicine wheel is just one example of how traditionally indigenous communities have used circles as a means of decision-making and conflict resolution.

The 'Quality Circle' initiative, first developed by Kaoru Ishikawa in Japan in the 1960s (Ishikawa, 1985), has been used widely in a business environment. It is based on the principle that full participation in decision-making and problem solving improves the quality of work.

Circles are now also an essential feature of the restorative justice movement, involving all who have been affected by an offence, including the offender.

Others have since taken up and developed the Circle Time framework and ethic within schools.

Jenny Mosley, in particular, is widely recognized for the significant contribution that she has made taking Circle Time into a framework for whole school quality.

Taken & adapted from Roffey 2006

When you proactively use circles in your classroom you...

- Build community within your class through empathy
- Develop, maintain and repair positive relationships in your class
- Develop, teach and model skills e.g. empathy, mutual respect, active listening, patience, tolerance, being open minded & non-judgmental, seeing others' points of view, managing conflict...
- Foster confidence in speaking aloud
- Engage children in learning

The benefits of using a circle includes...

- Equality as everyone has equal seating
- Safety and trust as you can see everything, nothing is hidden
- Responsibility as everyone can play a role
- Facilitation, the circle reminds the leader to facilitate and share the lead with pupils
- Ownership as participants feel the circle is theirs
- Connections are built as everyone listens to everyone's responses

Restorative Circles in Schools, Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2010

When to use circles in your classroom?

- Building & maintaining relationships
- Creating community
- Teaching & modeling skills & values
- Repairing harm
- Problem Solving
- Reacting to specific events & issues
- Teaching curriculum

The Restorative Circle Structure

CHECK IN

- Establishes good listening
- Opportunity to communicate & find out about each other
- Develops relationships
- Everyone has the opportunity to speak or pass
- Establishes mood and readiness for learning
- Should be a non- threatening start to session

MIXER

- To separate groupings & create new pairings
- Reduces intimidation
- Helps with the equality of the circle

FOCUS ACTIVITY

- A teaching point
- Problem solving
- Introduction of new topic

ENERGISER

- To create energy
- To relax people
- To have fun & explore connections

CHECK OUT

- Clear end to the session
- Opportunity for reflection on learning
- Can be used to check understanding/learning

Circle Planning Sheet

Check In	Resources
Mixer	
Main Focus	
Energiser	
Check Out	

General guidance for using circles

Getting started:

- Start with a check in and check out is a quick, flexible daily circle at the beginning and end of each day that practices the most basic of circle skills.
- Try to keep Check in/check outs future based to avoid competing or resentment building.
- Practice getting into circle – decide are you best on chairs or on the floor or around tables.
- Focus on the basics skills first of active listening; sitting still , speaking in turn , using a talking piece to support this.
- By engaging participants in a positive, often lighthearted process, participants can develop positive relationships, which are the foundation of a restorative culture.
- Create a needs guide for a successful circle- ‘What do we need for our circle sessions to go well?’
- If someone is unable to respect the rules – stop –return to the **CIRCLE TIME AGREEMENT**. If negative or harmful behaviours continue, explain that you’re not comfortable with the behaviour & ask participants for ways forward. Perhaps offer an alternative if it is proving challenging for them. Try to keep this interaction private.
- Everyone has the right to “pass” on a go-around. Participants shouldn’t feel under pressure to take part, but in time most people feel safe to do so. People who passed can be asked to offer their response at the end of the go round.
- Discuss how to share the talk so that everyone gets a chance.
- Emphasise the need to show respect even if you don't agree with what is being said.

REMEMBER –

- Circle time is key to building relationships.
- Create safety in your circle
- Offer confidentiality & fair process in your circles
- Foster emotional vocabulary
- Use restorative language
- Keep participants focused
- Always end on a positive
- Thank participants for taking part
- We all learn best when we are relaxed and having fun, whilst slightly out of our comfort zone and in our ‘learning zone’.
- The facilitator shares the talk. Ensure that there is shared participation.
- There are no “should” and “should not’s” when it comes to feelings, a feeling is a feeling. People should be sensitive to others’ feelings
- There must be a commitment to mutual respect. Putdowns are discouraged and should be explored to understand and address their need.

Strands for a successful Circle

- Be respectful
- Be positive
- Recognise its OK to feel what we feel
- Accept that we may have different view points
- Be understanding
- Encourage responsibility
- Allow quiet voices to be heard

Talking Objects

- Introduction of the talking piece – best practice would be to agree clear rules / norms/ expectations on the use of the talking piece at the very start, keep them written and visible to refer to/amend if needed.
- A talking piece can be anything that can be safely passed around the circle.
- It's a way of reinforcing the fact that one person talks at a time and that person should have the group's attention.
- It can also give fidgety people something tactile to do while speaking.
- Steer the group through the check in. Start by asking the check in question. Give your own answer and then send the talking piece around the group, allowing participant's time to give their responses.
- AS class's become confident in the use of the talking object, place the object in the middle of the circle, ask the check in question & then give thinking time. After a few minutes ask who would like to start the check in & they can take the talk object.
- Teach this first speaker to check with their neighbours who is ready to go next.
- The talking piece can be any item. It could be something as simple as a pen or something more symbolic for the group. It can be helpful to let the group decide what they want to use to create ownership. Sometimes bringing in a personal object with significance for you (the adult) adds value and respect to the talking object.
- A speaking object develops many restorative skills e.g. patience, tolerance, appreciation of others viewpoints, humility and, probably most importantly, empathy.

Things to consider ...

Children to be seated on chairs or carpet

Use of music / sand timer/ class song for setting out circle

What to use as a Talking Object

Use of Circle as part of registration

Use of Circle to introduce lesson content for lesson immediately after a Circle

To have Check out after end of day story time or use Circle positions for end of day story

Children to stay in circle until dismissed / visit cloakroom / collected by parents

Behaviour	Possible Messages	A Considered Response
Child refusing to join Circle Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't feel safe in Circle Time Please give me attention by asking me to sit down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tactically ignore (pretend you haven't seen it) Say to group <i>"It's great to see we're almost all here... yes, thanks I can see that Justin's not quite with us yet... let's get started"</i>
Children laying in seat, leaving seat, slumping in seat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm worn out/past it I have the wriggles Please tell me to sit up so everyone will notice me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tactically ignore (pretend you haven't seen it) Praise some children who are sitting straight Hand signal to children to straighten up Make eye contact with student and then sit up straight yourself When it's a good time to speak, say <i>"Can we all please make sure we are using our seats properly?"</i> <p>If many children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the session to a close — children are tired. Don't tell the circle that it is because of the poor behaviour, act like it was the plan anyway! Play a movement game to re-energize the group. Ask whether we need a rule for how we sit in Circle Time.
Talking out of turn Side conversations Disruptive noises or actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I've forgotten the rule I'm just impulsive and am learning where and when not to talk Please notice me everyone I'm the boss and will do what I want 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tactically ignore (pretend you haven't seen it) Privately signal to offending student (fingers on lips / hand over mouth) Play an All Change game to break up troublesome groupings Praise the group for following the Circle Time rules so well Address the person whose time it is to talk and ask them if they wouldn't mind waiting until everyone is quiet because what they have to say is important — ask the rest of the group to do the same when it's their turn Play an All Change game. On changing, get close to offending student and whisper <i>"I see you're struggling with our rules today — would you like some time out of the circle to remember our rules or are you OK now?"</i> Wait for their response. Change seats with a student so you can sit near offending student(s) or right in the middle of them! Move quietly to student and say quietly but firmly <i>"I see you're having trouble with our rules today, please go and sit at (pre-arranged place) and I'll call you back when you look ready to follow our rules."</i> <p>If many children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the session to a close (as if you were going to anyway). Don't give a lecture about how you're ending Circle Time because of their behaviour! Use a game of Silent Statements: <i>"Change places if you are feeling worried about the calling out at the moment"</i> Stop the group and re-read the Circle Time rules. Ask the group to give a show of hands for who believes all rules are being followed Stop and say to the group; <i>"Change places if you would like Circle Time to keep going." Once children have moved, "OK — hands up — what has to start happening for Circle Time to continue?"</i>
Silly responses to questions or during activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention seeking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laugh with the group if the response is genuinely humorous! This builds community! (Don't worry that this will cause a barrage of silliness from others — it rarely does) Tactically ignore behaviour (pretend you haven't heard it) Say innocently <i>"Oh, I mustn't have explained the question well enough, it was..."</i>
Inappropriate disclosure by student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want you to know... I want help with... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interrupt: <i>"Sarah, I'm going to stop you there because that's far too important to be shared here in Circle Time. Can I talk to you later about that?"</i> Go on with the activity.
Running in the circle during movement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I want to be first I want to sit next to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before movement games, ask the group about safe ways to move inside the circle Praise the group for moving safely, even if a couple of children didn't! This positive approach will bring more of the behaviour you want. Once student is in their seat, signal to them to walk / slow down. Quietly talk to student(s) about moving safely in Circle Time: <i>"It's great you are enjoying Circle Time so much. You need to walk in the circle, do you think you know why?"</i> Perhaps add a new Circle Time Rule about safe movement after some conversation with the group. You might say to the group <i>"I didn't feel safe when we played that last game because some of us ran in the circle. Change places if you think we should walk inside the circle... hands up who felt safer that time..."</i>

16 The Grab and Go Circle Time Kit

Taken from 'The Grab & Go Circle Time Kit for teaching restorative behaviour'
By B. Hansberry & J. Langely

CHECK IN IDEAS

- My Name is and

And I am feeling...

And If I were a colour I'd be...

And if I were an animal I'd be a...

And one of my favourite places to be is...

And one of my favourite pairs of shoes are...

And the pet I would like is...

And one of my favourite foods is...

And when I am older I would like to...

And I like to feel...

And I would like to be better at...

And I am happiest when...

And my birthday is in...

And one of my favourite free time activities is...

And at lunchtime I like to...

And if I were a cartoon character I would be...

- If you were a comic strip character, who would you be and why?
- What thought or message would you want to put in a fortune cookie?
- If you won a lottery ticket and had a million dollars, what would you do with it?
- You've been given access to a time machine. Where and when would you travel to?
- If you could be any superhero and have super powers, which one would you like to have and why?
- What award would you love to win and for what achievement?
- If you could transport yourself anywhere instantly, where would you go and why?
- In your opinion, which animal is the best (or most beautiful) and why?
- What is one item that you really should throw away, but probably never will?
- Growing up, what were your favourite toys to play with?
- What is one goal you'd like to accomplish during your lifetime?
- When you were little, who was one of your favourite super hero and why?
- Who is your hero? (a parent, a celebrity, an influential person in one's life)
- What's one of your favourite thing to do in the summer?
- If they made a movie of your life, what would it be about and which actor would you want to play you?
- If you were an ice cream flavour, which one would you be and why?
- If you could visit any place in the world, where would you choose to go and why?
- What's your ideal dream job?
- Are you a morning or night person?
- What are your favourite hobbies?
- What are your pet peeves or interesting things about you that you dislike?
- What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
- Name one of your favourite things about someone in your family.
- Tell us about a unique or quirky habit of yours.
- If someone made a movie of your life would it be a drama, a comedy, a romantic-comedy, action film, or science fiction?

MIXER IDEAS

- Change places if:
 - You have an 'a' in your name.
 - You have a sister.
 - You have a four legged pet.
- Change places by number—the children number round the circle:
 - Your number is bigger / smaller than...
 - You are an even / odd number.
 - You are a multiple of...
- Give each child the name of a fruit, car, season, colour, animal or link it to a topic you are covering in school e.g.
 - Red, yellow, green, orange—red change places.
 - Green and orange change places.
 - All change places if you say 'paintbox.'
- Mix up by getting in a certain order:
 - By house number.
 - Birthday.
 - Height.
 - Hair colour etc.
- Noah's Ark
 - The children are all given a card with the name or picture of an animal on it. There are 2 of each animal. They can look at their card but not show it to anyone. The aim of the mixer is to move into the middle of the circle and find the other animal in the pair by miming.
- The Sun Shines on... (one chair missing from the circle)
- Someone stands in the middle and says something that is true for them. Everyone else it is true for must stand up and change places e.g. the sun shines on all those who have a pet / like chocolate etc. The person in the middle tries to find a spare seat leaving a new person in the middle. · Here I sit in the long grass...
 - Ensure there is an empty chair next to you. Move into it and say, 'Here I sit...' The person who had been sitting next to you then moves into the chair you have left and says, 'In the long grass.' The person sitting next to them moves into their seat and says, 'With my friend' and names someone from across the circle. The person moves across to the empty chair and leaves their own seat empty. The 2 children either side try to fill it and the game continues as above.
- Drumbeat—group by numbers:
 - Everyone stands up and mingles around the circle to music e.g. hand clapping, banging a drum or tambourine. When the music stops they freeze and you call out a number. Everyone gets into a group of that number (everyone looks around and ensures no-one is left alone).

MIXER IDEAS

Human Treasure Hunt

It is important to keep the pace of this game rather fast.]The Facilitator Explains: On this treasure hunt we're going to search for things we have within us and not necessarily on us. Your goal is to meet as many people as you can and find the similarities between you. If you don't know the person(s) remember to introduce yourself first.

Examples:

Find another person who has the "same" shoe size as you

Find three people who live in a different type of living group than you

Find three other people who enjoy the same type of music

Find two people who enjoy the same recreational activities (biking, swimming, watching tv, reading, playing music, etc.)

Group Variation

The facilitator directs the group to form groups. Give the group enough time to incorporate and then introduce themselves to one another. For example:

Get into a group of...

Three and introduce yourself

A different group of five people and introduce yourself

A group of people who have socks/shoes of the same colour and introduce yourself

People whose names have the same first vowel in their first name

People who were born in the same season (autumn, winter, spring, summer)...

Variations

Once participants are in their groups ask them to Line Up! (See below) Example: "In your season group, arrange yourselves by birth date (month and day)"

MIXER IDEA

Line-Up

1. This is a useful activity for groups of 16 or more.
2. For large groups, organise participants into smaller groups of 8 to 20 people.
3. Explain that when they are asked to line-up in a particular way they need to get into the lines as quickly as possible.
4. When any one group finishes the line-up , the group's members should clap to indicate that they have finished.

Line up criteria options include:

- Line up in order by age
- Line up in order by shoe size
- Line up in order by length of arm's reach
- Line up in order of height (shortest to tallest)
- Line up in order alphabetically by first name
- Line up in order by date of birth from January to December
- Line up in order by number of brothers and sisters you have
- Line up in order by length of time in your current occupation
- Line up in order by number of animals you own

Variations

1. Alternatively use line up criteria that are relevant to the topic
2. Use this activity periodically during longer sessions as a quick energiser
3. Ask groups to come up with their own way of letting you know they have finished (e.g. yell, hum a song, put up their hands, etc.) This can add a lot fun to the exercise.

ENERGISERS

Switch:

- The leader begins an action e.g. hand clapping, tapping knees, clicking fingers. The rest of the class do not follow the action until the leader says, 'Switch.' After a short while the leader changes the action, the rest of the class continue to do the first action until the leader says, 'Switch.'

Detective Games:

- One person is chosen to leave the room or turn around (if they can be trusted!). This person is the detective. Whilst they are not looking 2 children are chosen to change places. When the detective looks around, (s)he tries to see who has changed places.

Elephants and Palm Trees:

- Ask for a volunteer and invite them to stick out an arm as if it were an elephant's trunk.
- The person on either side of this central person turns towards them and, raising one arm and dropping the other to create a kind of circle, forms the shape of an elephant's ear. From the front this should look a bit like an elephant's head. (try it!).
- Ask for another volunteer and ask them to stand with their arms raised above their head. They are the trunk of a palm tree. The people either side turn away from this central person, hold their arms out straight away from their bodies and begin swooshing them up and down. These are the swaying fronds of the tree. (trust me!).
- Ask for another volunteer and ask them to hold their arms out straight on either side and start rotating like a helicopter, BUT ONLY WHEN THE PEOPLE EITHER SIDE HAVE CROUCHED DOWN SAFELY.
- Now you are ready to start the game. Circulate slowly in the centre of the circle and then point to someone and say either 'Elephant', 'Palm Tree' or 'Helicopter'. Whichever it is, the person you have pointed to is the centre of the sculpture and the people either side have to take up their positions too.
- Try this slowly for a while and then speed up. Anyone who hesitates or gets it wrong can take their turn in the centre of the circle but this is meant to be fun so keep it light!

Untie the Knot:

- Divide the group into smaller groups of between 8 or 10. There needs to be an even number.
- Ask each group to stand in a circle and close their eyes.
- Invite everyone to hold out their right hand and grasp a hand they find. Trainers can hover to help ensure everyone finds a right hand to hold.
- Now ask people to hold out their left hands and find a spare hand to grasp.
- Eyes can now be opened.
- The task is to unravel the knot of people without letting go of any hands.
- It is often possible for the group to find themselves in a circle once again.
- Sometimes the combination is impossible—trainers need to be encouraging and patient as the group organises itself. It is very tempting to give instructions or rescue. Try not to as this takes ownership of the problem and the solution away from the group.
- At the end groups can discuss what worked or did not work as co-operative strategies.

ENERGISERS

· Crocodiles and Frogs:

- Sheets of newspaper are laid randomly around the floor and people are invited to stand on one of them, in pairs or small groups.
- Everyone is told that they are frogs, standing on lily pads and the floor is a big pond in which lives a hungry crocodile. The crocodile is asleep, and the sound of a shaker (dried beans in a tin) is his snoring. When the snoring stops the crocodile is awake and will eat any frog not on a lily pad!
- Everyone is urged off their lily pad as the shaker is shaken and people move around nervously. ON the first round or so the number of sheets of paper remains the same so everyone gets the hang of it.
- Subsequently sheets are removed or torn in half so that the number of safe places to escape the crocodile reduce. Once someone is touched in the pond they are 'out'. The co-operation is around people helping others out of the pond.
- Eventually there is only one small piece of paper left, it is generally nice to leave people still alive and give them a clap!

· Tropical Storm:

You can introduce this by asking if anyone has experience of a tropical storm or can remember a hot sultry day when a thunderstorm develops and swiftly goes away. Recall the initial breeze, the drops increasing to a crescendo, then dying away until there is only the breeze and finally silence.

The instructions are that no one talks, but keenly watches the person on their right. Whatever they do or stop doing must be copied but don't copy anyone else. The temptation is to copy the facilitator!

- Now you start by slowly rubbing your hands—this movement should pass round the circle.
- When it comes back to you start tapping two fingers of one hand on the palm of the other.
- Again when this has passed round the circle start clapping—try to discourage clapping in time, it works best if it is random.
- Next stamp your feet.
- Return to clapping.
- Return to tapping.
- Return to rubbing your hands.
- Next lay your hands on your lap.

Remember the movements should pass round the circle so that the changes happen gradually. Everyone should keep doing whatever they are doing until the person on their right starts doing something else. The whole thing should sound like a tropical storm!

ENERGISERS

· Walk the Walk:

- Invite people to walk around the room and then freeze when you clap your hands.
- Call out an adverb and ask people to continue walking in that way e.g. sadly, happily, angrily etc.
- Invite a small group to choose an adverb secretly, walk in that way and ask others to guess what their adverb was.
- De-brief by reflecting on what clues we use to guess at how people are feeling and how accurate these are. Consider whether ultimately one way to find out how people are feeling is to ask them.

Clap Snap Association

Gather group in a circle sitting on the floor. Start by teaching them the clap, clap, snap, snap left, snap, snap right and repeat several times until they have the hang of it. Then explain that we are going to free associate. At the end of the second snap to the right the first player says any first word that comes to their mind. Tell the players to shout out their words loudly so all can hear over the clapping and snapping. Keep going around the circle in a clockwise fashion until you get to the end.

Clap Snap Association 2

You can play this with clap snap or simply as a word association game.

The facilitator begins by saying the name of any country, city, river, ocean or mountain that can be found in an atlas. The person to the left must then say another name that begins with the last letter of the word just given. Each person has a definite time limit (e.g. three - five seconds) and no names can be repeated. For example - First person: Wellington, Second Person: Ngaruawhaia, Third Person: Auckland

Clap Snap Association

You can play this with clap snap or simply as a word association game. The first person starts with any word they wish i.e. red. The next person repeats the first word and adds another word which links to the first i.e. tomato. The next person repeats the previous word and add another word link i.e. soup and so on. Each person has a definite time limit (e.g. three - five seconds) and no names can be repeated.

Impulse

Have the group hold hands around the circle. Ask the group to send a pulse signal through the group. Time it. Now challenge the group to do it faster.

Note: If you allow the group several opportunities make sure you have a timer that displays hundredths of a second.

ENERGISERS

Clap and Point

The facilitator sends a clap all the way around the circle, first in one direction, then in the other direction. The facilitator then shows participants how they can change the direction of the clap, by pointing the clapping hands in the opposite direction. Repeat this until the clap is running smoothly around the group and changing direction without missing a beat. Finally, show how you can 'throw' the clap by pointing the clapping hands at someone across the circle.

Zip Zap Boing

Everyone stands in a circle and one person starts the throwing the ball. If you throw the ball to one of the two people either side of you, you say Zip. If you throw it to anyone else in the whole group you say Zap, and if you throw it back to the person that threw the ball to you, you say Boing.

I'm Seeking Common Ground

Group sits in a circle of chairs with one person standing in the middle (no empty chairs).

The person in the middle says, I seek common ground with people who were born in January. Anyone who was, including the person asking the question, must get up and run across the circle to find a new seat. You can't take the seat of the person next to you. There will be one person left in the middle who must ask the next question. Possibilities include: people who wear glasses. Likes vanilla ice cream better than chocolate. The facilitator can ask the first few questions to get the game going and set the tone, then handover to the player in the middle.

Impossible Connections

Have the group begin to wander around the room. When the leader calls out a command like three left elbows then as quick as you can, players should gather in groups of three with left elbows touching. Follow with any combination of four hips, two right feet, six knees, two shoulders, seven left hands etc.

CHECK OUT IDEAS

Longer Check Outs:

- My name is and
 - And one of the things I enjoyed today was...
 - And one of my favourite teas is...
 - And tomorrow I am looking forward to...
 - And one of the things I learnt today was...
 - And today one of my best lessons was...
 - And for lunch I had...
 - And this weekend I am looking forward to...
 - And tonight I am going to say something kind to...
 - And today I improved in...
 - And today I was happy when...
 - And one thing I will remember from today is...
 - And I would like to travel home in a...
- What I have found most useful from this circle session is...
- My next steps around this area of learning will be...
- The thing I found hardest to understand today was...

Quick Check Outs:

- One/three words to describe...
 - this circle sessions is....
 - Today is...
 - Tonight is...
 - This weekend is
- Choose between...
 - Ice cream or ice lolly
 - Burger or pizza
 - TV or phone
 - Starter or pudding
 - Singing or dancing