

Appendix 2

Sample Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Quotes

One simple way to mark the beginning of a circle is through the use of short quotations. Read clearly, quotes can provide a focal point for entry into a different space. Here are some examples of quotations that may be useful.

“The ultimate measure of a person is not where one stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where one stands in times of challenge and controversy.”

-Martin Luther King

“In separateness lies the world's great misery; in compassion lies the world's true strength.”

-Buddha

-Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony. In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.

-Albert Einstein

“Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it stands than to anything on which it is poured.”

-Anonymous

“There never was a war that was not inward; I must fight till I have conquered in myself what causes war. “

-Marianne Moore

“The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.”

-Black Elk

“Better than a thousand hollow words is one word that brings peace. “

-Buddha

“Do you know what astonished me most in the world? The inability of force to create anything. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the spirit.”

-Napoleon Bonaparte

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing, there is a field.
I will meet you there."
-Rumi

"How do I listen to others?
As if everyone were my Master
Speaking to me
His cherished last words"
-Hafiz

Readings

For numerous readings see the MN DOC website www.doc.state.mn.us Click on Restorative Justice and then on **Inspirational Openings and Closings**.

Deep breathing and relaxation

Following is a sample script for deep breathing:

Mindful Breathing

Find a place where you are sitting comfortably. If you feel okay doing so, close your eyes. If you don't want to, then just find a place in front of you where you can gently focus—maybe on the table, floor, or the wall across from where you are sitting. Now take four deep breaths. Feel your chest rise and fall as you take in the air and let it out. Each time you breathe in, imagine taking in a calm, peaceful feeling. As you breathe out, let all the stress leave your body. Let your shoulders relax and soften. Let your eyes and face relax and soften. Let all the stress leave your whole body.

Continue with more breaths to simply pay attention to your breathing. One place in your body to follow your breathing is your nose. Notice how the air feels as it comes in through your nostrils. Perhaps the air is cooler as you breath in but slightly warmer as you exhale. Follow the breath completely as you breathe out.

Another place to become aware of your breathing is in your belly. It sometimes helps to gently place your hands across your stomach—almost like you are holding a basketball. Notice how your belly expands or gets bigger as you take a breath in and the air fills your lungs. As you breathe out, you'll feel your chest and belly sink—just like letting the air out of a basketball. Let your breath come and go naturally. You don't have to "try" and take deep or regular breaths. Just let your body's natural breathing rhythm happen. Your job is not to change your breath; it's just to pay attention to what's going on already.

Silence

Collective silence can be a highly effective means of beginning a session in a calm, focused manner. Silence can be combined with contemplation (e.g. 'what is most important for you to say today'), writing (e.g. 'what brought you here.'), drawing (e.g. 'how are you feeling today?') or simply a few deep and intentional breaths before beginning to circulate the talking piece.

Activities

Passing: passing an item around the circle (before the talking piece) may bring people together over a common symbol.

Tying: “Weave a web between people in a circle by having each participant hold a piece of yarn and throw the ball of yarn to another person in the circle while sharing a [brief] story or emotion to represent their shared journey into conflict (Schirch, 2005, pg. 168)”

Ball of clay: explain that you possess a ball of clay which can be turned into any object. The object must be sculpted out of the invisible clay, then without speaking, used for its purpose to demonstrate what it is. For example, you may sculpt a fishing rod, which you then use to briefly act out the scene of catching a fish. After this is done, go through the motions of forming the clay back into a ball, and pass it to the next person in the circle. Again, this simple game allows people to express their creativity and personality non-verbally, and begins the circle on a note of fun.

Group story (closing): One person begins---“Once upon a time there was a team.....” and completes the sentence. Each person adds one meaningful sentence that builds on the sentence that came before it. The story should travel around the circle once—twice for smaller groups with the last person in the circle contributing the final sentence and then saying “...and that for now is the end!!

Ribbon ceremony of encouragement (closing): Distribute one piece of ribbon about a yard long to each person. Turn to the person to your left. While tying your ribbon to that person’s ribbon give some words of encouragement to that person. When you have finished invite the person to your left to turn to the person to his/her left, tie the ribbon to the next person’s ribbon and say something encouraging to that person. Repeat around the circle until the ribbon is tied all the way around and each person has both given and received encouragement.

Self affirmation (closing): Pass a roll of toilet paper around the circle inviting participants to take as many sheets as they wish from the roll before passing it to the next person. Ask them to separate and stack the sheets they tore off the roll. Pass the talking piece asking each participant to make a positive statement about him or her self for each piece of toilet paper they have – and encourage them to do statements about their physical being, their mental being, their emotional being and their spiritual being. We suggest that the keeper go first to model the activity.

Puzzle (opening): Create or purchase a puzzle with very large pieces (such as a children’s floor puzzle). Pass a container with the pieces asking each participant to take a piece and say something about how the piece fits them. Keep passing until all the pieces are distributed. Ask participants to go to the center and put the puzzle together.

Human sculpture (opening): Explain that we are going to make a human sculpture. Ask for someone who is willing to start the sculpture. Invite that person into the center of the circle to take a position and hold the position until the sculpture is finished. One by one going clockwise around the circle from the person who started the sculpture ask each participant to come to the center and arrange themselves in the human sculpture and then hold that position until it is finished. When the sculpture is finished ask participants to take a deep breath and notice their creation as something more than the collection of their individual identities. Invite them to take another deep breath and then to return to their chairs in the circle. Place the centerpiece items in the center of the circle.

Rainstorm activity: Keeper starts by rubbing hands palm to palm up and down in front of his/her chest; the next person to the left joins in the motion and then the next and the next all around the circle like a wave, with the Keeper continuing the motion while it moves around the circle. When the motion returns to the keeper, the keeper stops the hand rubbing and begins alternately slapping hands on his/her thighs. The next person follows the keeper's change and one by one around the circle each person follows the change of movement of the person before them. When it returns again to the keeper, the keeper stops slapping the thighs and alternately stomps feet. This movement then is followed one by one around the circle. When it returns to the keeper the keeper stops stomping the feet and again does the thigh slapping motion and that motion is passed around the circle. Finally the keeper once again does the hand rubbing motion. When that motion comes back to the keeper, the keeper stops all motion. One by one each person in the circle follows the person before them in stopping until all are quiet.

Music

Music can bring the attention of the room together in the context of a shared or similar emotional experience. The type of music, and whether or not to choose instrumental or vocal music, will vary greatly with the context.

Movement

Lead the group through the following simple yoga movements for an opening or a closing:

1. With palms together in front of your heart, ground through the feet and feel the connection with the earth through the soles of the feet.
2. Exhale and fold forward from the waist to touch the earth with your hands. Bend your knees to make this comfortable.
3. From here, take a deep breathe in, and sweep your arms skyward as you stand upright. Bring your palms together overhead and look up as you stretch upward.
4. Exhale as you bring your arms down palms together in front of the heart.
5. Inhale as you sweep your arms outward and up skyward, palms together looking up. Exhale as bring your arms down palms together in front of the heart.
6. Inhale as you sweep your arms outward and up skyward, palms together looking up. Exhale as bring your arms down palms together in front of the heart.