

## Circle Flow

**Intro:** Who is facilitating and what is the purpose of the circle?

**Icebreaker:** To help get participants comfortable in the circle space and with one another. Helps to begin with some laughter and/or movement.

**Guidelines:**

- Speak from the heart
- Listen from the heart
- Speak spontaneously
- Speak leanly
- Respect the talking piece
- Confidentiality
- What are other guidelines students want in their circle?

**Check In Question:** To get a sense of how everyone is doing.

**Guiding Question(s):** Inspired by what came up in the check in. These are more in depth. They help build relationships between participants by focusing on personal experiences and asking people to share about themselves.

**Closing:** Conclude the circle in a good way. Sometimes a circle can bring about many different feelings. The way you close the circle helps participants walk away feeling that they are in a good place and that there was some closure to the circle.

- Breathing exercise
- Quote/poem/song
- Everyone shares one word of how they are feeling
- Other ideas?

**After Circle...**

**Circle Facilitator Debrief Questions:**

1. How do you feel after the circle?
2. What was your favorite part of the circle?
3. What was most challenging about the circle?
4. What did you do well as a circle facilitator?
5. What could you have improved on as a circle facilitator?

## Ice Breaker Community Activities

All of the below circle activities do not require any resources and support the circle structure because they are easily accessible in a circle format.

**Sight, Sound, Smell, Touch and Taste:** Each person should describe where they are from using one of their senses. Each person can begin by saying something like, "I come from the sound of....(ex. loud noises, horns honking...New York)". If it is a large group, you can have each participant select only one of their senses, to adjust for time.

**Weather Report:** The talking piece is passed around and everyone explains how they are feeling using weather terms. For example, one person might say they are feeling like it is really cloudy and cold but they see a few sun rays shining through.

**Animal Name Game:** Have each person introduce themselves in the circle by sharing their name, an animal that begins with the first letter of their name, and an action or sound that that animal makes. This helps people remember each other's name more easily.

**My name is?:** Go around the group and ask each person to state his/her name and attach an adjective that not only describes a dominant characteristic, but also starts with the same letter of his name e.g. generous Grahame, dynamic Dave. Write them down and refer to them by this for the rest of the evening.

**Where the Wind Blows:** One person stands in the middle of the circle and their chair is taken out of the circle so that there is 1 less chair in the circle than there are people. The person in the middle says "The wind blows for anyone who (insert action)." Everyone stands that identifies with the statement and has to find a new seat. The rules are that you cannot sit in the seat right next to the seat you were sitting in and no running.

**Monkey see, Monkey do:** In this activity, the facilitator will ask each person to describe how they are feeling using a motion or action. For example, someone might be feeling strong so they would hold up their arms to show their muscles. After each person performs their motion or action, everyone else in the group must imitate it.

**Crumpled Paper Game:** Crumple a piece of paper and ask everyone in the circle to stand. The goal is to keep the paper ball bouncing for as long as possible without it falling to the ground. The rules are: you can only bounce the ball one time to keep it moving, and then someone else has to bounce the ball. Once someone else has bounced the ball once, then you are able to bounce the ball again. Each time the ball bounces, the group should count together, One, Two, Three, and so forth. Demonstrate bouncing the ball on the palm of your hand and counting as a group. Then, begin the game and see how long the group can keep the ball bouncing.

**The Yes Game:** Everyone stands in a circle. Person one initiates by pointing across the circle to someone and saying their name. The 2nd person has to say yes and then person 1 starts walking towards person 2. Person 2 has to point to someone else across the circle, say their name and wait for permission to start walking towards them. Person 2 must move before person 1 reaches their spot. This process continues until someone moves when they haven't been given permission. At that time the game starts over.

**Human Knott:** Everyone stands in a circle facing each other. Instruct everyone to lift their left hand and grab the hand of someone standing across the circle from them. Then instruct everyone to reach their right hand across the circle and grab a 2nd person's hand. Make sure no one is holding hands with someone standing directly next to them. The goal is to figure out how to untangle the human knot without letting go of any hands. Students can use verbal communication to get themselves out of the knot.

**Two Truths and a Lie:** Each person in the circle thinks of 3 statements and two are true and one is NOT true. Each person shares their 3 statements and the rest of the group guesses which of the statements is false. The rest of the group votes on each statement and the person reveals which one is the lie. The goal is to determine which of the 3 statements a person says, is not true.

**Rock, Paper, Scissors:** Pair everybody up and explain the rules of Rock Paper Scissors so everybody is on the same page, including the timing and once one person wins the other person becomes their cheerleader as they face with a winner near them, leading to a final between the two winners with cheerleaders cheering them both on.

**Zip, Zap, Zoom:** Everyone stands in a circle and the first person starts by rubbing their hands together and pointing to someone across the circle, while saying zip and making eye contact. The second person locks eyes with someone else across the circle and says zap. The third person locks eyes and points to a fourth person and says zoom. This continues until someone messes up and then that person is out.

**Dominos (From the Anti-Defamation League):** One person starts by identifying 2 things about her/himself, one for each hand (examples: I have 4 siblings and my favorite hobby is crafting). That person has to find two other people that have what they identified in common with them. They link by holding hands. Then the 2nd person identifies something about her/himself and tries to find someone else who has it in common. This continues until the whole class is linked by holding hands.

**Group Story:** The first person says a word, for example 'The'. The second person says the first word and ADDS a second word of their choice, and so on. At the end you might have a complete sentence!

**Interview:** Divide into pairs. Ask them to take three minutes to interview each other. Each interviewer has to find 3 interesting facts about their partner. Bring everyone back to together and ask everyone to present the 3 facts about their partner to the rest of the group. Watch the time on this one, keep it moving along.

**Desert Island:** Announce, 'You've been exiled to a deserted island for a year. In addition to the essentials, you may take one piece of music, one book and one luxury item you can carry with you i.e. not a boat to leave the island! What would you take and why?'

**Word link:** This is a word association game. Ask the group to sit in a circle. 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. To keep this moving, only allow five seconds for each word link.

**Line up:** Ask the students to line up. Works best with 8-10 in a line. If you've got a bigger group, split them up and challenge each line to complete the task first. Ask the group to form a new line in order of....

- Height, from smallest to tallest.
- Birthdays, from January through to December.
- Alphabetical first names (A-Z).
- Alphabetical mothers first names.
- Alphabetical grandmother's first names!
- Shoe size, from smallest to largest.

**Twenty questions:** The facilitator begins by thinking of an item. Going in a circle using the talking piece, the rest of the group tries to guess the item by asking a question which can only be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No." Once the group figures out the answer, someone else can choose to pick the next item.

**Strength Builders:** One individual from the group sits in the comfy chair. This person who is hearing the strength builders is not allowed to say anything or communicate negativity non-verbally. One by one, the rest of the group members then tell the person in the chair positive thoughts, affirming stories, praise for something remembered, thanks for help in a situation, and other positive sentiments.

**Cross the line:** Students can either form a line or remain in their circle. The facilitator will read off statements about things that students may have in common. Statements should start off with more light hearted ones, moving to deeper/personal ones. Each time a statement is read, the facilitator should ask participants to either step forward or back. Encourage the participants to look around and make eye contact with those who also step toward the line, meaning they have something in common.

**Creative Communication:** Begin by dividing your group in pairs. Have them sit back to back. One person will receive a copy of a pre-drawn object that is not too complex. The second person will have a blank piece of paper, a writing utensil and something hard to draw on. Give them about 10 mins to complete the task. After they have completed their collaborative drawing, have them compare it to the initial picture and see how they did.

**Hug-a-Bear:** There will be one person facilitating this activity. When the game begins, everyone else must stroll around the room until the facilitator calls out a number. Participants must then gather with that many people. For instance, if the facilitator calls out the number 6, then everyone must form groups of 6 people. If there are people who do not have a group to join, then they are out for the remainder of the game.

**Telephone:** The facilitator should come up with a phrase and whisper it to the person next to them. Each person then whispers it to the person they are sitting next to. It is important that everyone is listening well because the phrase is only allowed to be told to each person once! Once the last person in the group hears the phrase, he/she will say it out loud. The goal is to see how well the phrase maintained its original form.

## Circle Questions

**Check In Questions:** Check in questions are easy questions for people to answer. They help build comfort and trust among the group. Remember the “check in” is a 1 or 2 sentence share that gives insight into the energy level of the group. Check in questions help participants feel comfortable with each other by building community.

- Share how you are feeling on a scale from 1-10.
- Share a high and low of your weekend. How are you feeling right now?
- How was your morning?
- What did you do over the weekend?

**Guiding Questions:** Guiding questions are more in depth. They help build relationships between participants by focusing on personal experiences and asking people to share about them. Guiding questions are the central part of keeping a circle. Everything you do before or after the guiding questions is to feel comfortable and safe answering these questions. The guiding questions will always be different and relate to the specific topic or theme of the circle. The art of asking powerful and eloquent questions is at the heart of good circle keeping.

### Lower Risk Questions

- Share your name and something about your name.
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What is one skill or talent you have?
- Finish the sentence “I like to collect...”
- If you could be an animal, what animal would you be and why?
- If you could be a super hero, what super powers would you have and why?
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? And why?
- If you had an unexpected free day, what would you do?
- What is your favorite place to go at school and why?
- What do you like to do with your free time?
- Do you have a small or large family? What do you like/dislike about that?
- What is your favorite class/subject?

### Higher Risk Questions

- What are 3 things you would do if you could change the world?
- What is an obstacle that gets in the way of you reaching your goals?
- What is your cultural heritage and what role does it play in your life?
- If you could talk to someone from your family that is no longer alive, who would it be & why?
- What is the most important lesson you have learned in your life? What made it important?
- What change would you like to see in your community? How can you help?
- What is something you value about you school?
- What is the most important quality in a friend?
- Who is a teacher that positively influenced you?
- In what situation did you feel the least powerful? What made you feel that way?
- Share a time you were outside your comfort zone.
- Share a time you felt you did not belong.
- Share a time you felt you did belong.

## **Restorative Circles' Closing Suggestions**

Restorative Practices is a powerful process for all of its participants. By their very nature, Restorative Circles can stir up deep-seeded emotions because of their organic and naturally evolving nature. Below are some suggestions to facilitate the completion of a circle. However, many of these suggestions can be used to open a circle as well. One key component of closing a Circle is to thank the participants for their time, contribution, dedication to the process, and their willingness to take part in the circle.

### **1. Three Reflective Words (This can also be used to open a circle)**

The Three Reflective Words technique asks participants to reflect on the Circle by sharing three words that express their thoughts about the Circle that just completed. This technique is particularly effective for large groups and when there is limited time.

### **2. Deep Breathing**

Deep Breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Those things that happen when you are stressed, such as increased heart rate, fast breathing, and high blood pressure, all decrease as you breathe deeply to relax.<sup>1</sup> For Circles that may be tense such as a Repairing Harm Circle, this is also a possible way to open the Circle. Participants can sit with their eyes either open or closed for a few minutes breathing deeply or sighing before beginning.

### **3. State a Color (This can also be used to open a circle)**

Stating a Color to reflect how a participant is feeling is a great indicator for the facilitator to gauge both how the Circle went and get a sense of how participants are feeling in preparation for the next Circle.

### **4. State a Positive Hope and/or Expectation for the Next Circle**

The technique of Stating a Positive Hope and/or Expectation for the Next Circle begins building momentum and anticipation for the next Circle. While it does not necessarily offer "closure" in the traditional sense, it lends itself to the anticipation of the next Circle by already creating both a positive and hopeful expectation for future Circle outcomes.

### **5. Slow to Fast Clap**

Participants begin with a slow clap and gradually increase the pace. When the group is in a full on applause, the closing is complete. This can also be done by using a rhythm of the facilitator's choice.

### **6. Leap Frog Hands**

Everyone holds out their hands palms up. Each participant should put their left hand under the hand of the person to their left. The end result should be that each participant has their left hand under the person's hand to their left and their right hand above the person's hand to their right. The facilitator begins by taking their right palm and placing it in the person's hand to the left. That person then continues the pattern. At the end, everyone should have given the person to the left a high five/clap.

### **7. Send a Pulse**

Each person in the circle holds hands. The facilitator begins by squeezing the person's hand to their left. Each person continues this pattern until the "pulse" comes back to the facilitator.

## **8. The Honest Reflection**

The Honest Reflection method to close a Circle allows for an honest and authentic verbal assessment from participants in the Circle. Each person in the Circle gives a sentence or two of feedback about the themes that surfaced during the Circle.

## **9. Best Practices**

The Best Practices closing approach is a low-risk way to determine participants' thoughts after a Circle. The posed question, "What did you like best about today's Circle?" This question guides participants to focus on that which was specifically positive and redeeming about the Circle by encouraging positive feedback, a wonderful contagion.

## **10. Weather Report (This can also be used to open a circle)**

The Weather Report allows the facilitator to get a pulse of how participants are feeling by using the analogy of a weather report. For example, a participant might share that at the close of the Circle, their weather report is sun-shiny, while another might indicate that their weather report is overcast with a chance of rain. Of course there is no one or correct response, rather an opportunity for participants to honestly express how they are feeling. The purpose is to assess the emotional status of the participants.

## **11. Silence (This can also be used to open a circle)**

Everyone in the group holds a moment of silence and reflects silently on the process of the Circle, or holds a moment of silence to hold others in regard, or to silently acknowledge others.

## **12. Acknowledgment / Appreciation (This can also be used to open a circle)**

The closing process of Acknowledgement / Appreciation provides the opportunity for each participant to make a statement of acknowledgment or appreciation for something someone else in the group shared during the Circle.

## **13. Snapshot**

The use of the Snapshot method to close a Circle allows participants to capture one moment, the essence of a powerful statement or idea that was shared during the Circle as a reflection, a synthesizing idea.

## **14. Serpent Hand-Shake**

The first person greets the person to their left with a handshake. Then they greet the next person in line, and keep following down the line greeting one person at a time. Everyone follows the first person by greeting everyone in the line. The person to the right of the person who starts, doesn't move because he/she is the end of the serpent.