

HOPE JOURNEYS COMMUNITY BUILDING CHOICES

Circle Process

When developing a strong Circle of Support, issues can often arise. Participation in the various Types of Circles works hand-in-hand with ABCD methods, creating a durable foundation for an effective Circle of Support



“We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone.”

Sandra Day O’Conner- Supreme Court Justice

Healing Circles help us step out of ordinary time into a safe and accepting environment in which to explore our healing. With open minds, we explore together ways of deepening our capacity to heal, alleviating our suffering, and finding meaning in both challenge and joy.

<https://healingcircleshouston.org>

Intro to Healing Circles: Online Resources and Videos.

CIRCLE PROCESS

Deriving from practices of Native Americans, First Nations, and indigenous peoples, the **Circle Process allows for the formation of relationships, the honoring of voices, and the creation of unity.**

The process is, at its essence, a story sharing process, which brings together people as equals to have open exchanges about difficult issues or painful experiences in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone.

It is called "Circle" because everyone sits in a circle. An item called a **"talking piece"** is used to ensure each participant gets uninterrupted time to share with the group; **the person holding the object is the only one who may speak.** The talking piece is passed from person to person, and everyone is expected to respect others and be sensitive to their experiences as they share their stories. **The others listen openly, without question or judgment.**

The key principles of the Circle Process are to:

- Honor the presence and dignity and value the contribution of every participant.
- Emphasize the connectedness among people.
- Support emotional and spiritual expression.
- Give equal voice to all.

Confidentiality is also key, to ensure openness and emotional safety.

Furthermore, participation is voluntary; **no participant is required to share unless they choose to.**

The use of the **Circle Process** to help individuals in need has grown in recent years and is now being **used in many settings,** including neighborhoods, schools, prisons, workplaces, families, and marriages.

There are many different types of circles, such as healing, conflict resolution, community building, and celebration.

Healing circles in particular provide a safe space in which people who have suffered similar trauma can come together and speak openly about their trauma and leave feeling healed or on the road to recovery.

Healing Justice uses both restorative justice and healing circles to address the concentric circles of harm caused by wrongful convictions.

*Excerpt From The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking
by Kay Pranis*

Successful Talking Circles are simple and you only need a couple things in order for them to be successful

- **A talking piece** - any item that can be passed or tossed. This can be something symbolic to the group, or something playful like a squishy ball.
- **A physical space that accommodates the entire group to sit side by side in a circle** either in chairs or on the floor - For younger students, a rug to sit on is ideal, but chairs can also be placed around a group of tables if this makes the process easier.
- **A facilitator who leads the discussion and ensures that expectations are being followed** - the facilitator in the classroom is generally the teacher, although students can take turns facilitating as well.
- **Adequate time for a talking circle to take place** - generally the more often a talking circle takes place, the less time is needed.
- **A prompt** - this can be any topic of discussion and should be age-specific. The most common prompt when doing talking circles in classrooms is a simple check-in.

Tips on how to run a successful talking circle:

1. Be sure that the group is clear about and has agreed on expectations before the talking circle begins.
2. As a group, decide how to ensure that the expectations will be respected (including what the consequences are if they are not respected).
3. Be sure that the expectations are followed; this is the responsibility of the facilitator.
If expectations are followed, the success of the taking circle will happen naturally.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT CIRCLE PROCESS

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEgHORzyT_JmwxBn1NBFsn5sjxS748Pbd

Hope Journeys YouTube Videos-Circle Process Playlist

***Important Note* When issues arise in Circle of Support development. Routinely return to the Circle Process. This reset will get things back on track strengthening the Circle of Support.**

ADDITIONAL CIRCLE RESOURCES:

BOOKS

**The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking, Kay Pranis
2005**

WEBSITES

<https://healingcirclesglobal.org>

Introducing Healing Circles and Talking Circles into Primary Care- NCBI-NIH

<https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>

Healing Circles for Teachers as a Restorative Self-Care Practice

<https://mindfulschools.org>