



Since ancient times, people have sat in Circle to discuss difficult and important issues. Knowing the value of collective wisdom, these cultures utilized the Circle communication process to involve its members and their authentic perspectives in these important discussions. These ancient leaders also used the Circle to reflect and celebrate the successes and transitions of its members. The Circle Process, though different from culture to culture, had the common theme of developing trust and community in a way that is focused and surpassingly effective. Today, many organizations, companies and leaders have begun utilizing this group facilitation process to impact and transform their organization and community.

Circles are used in various settings and organizations, enabling facilitators to create a safe environment where individuals can comfortably express their perspectives and contribute their deepest talents and ideas. In Circle, everyone's voice and life experience bring wisdom to the process. These contributions are often passively discouraged in our everyday workplaces and interactions based on dynamics of job title, education or age differences or other cultural classifications. The Circle Center works to provide Circle facilitation and training for organization leaders seeking these group facilitation skills. Circle participants contribute to their organization in new and powerful ways while also supporting and listening to their fellow participants. These conversations help organizations reduce turn-over and attrition; and, inspire and motivate individuals and teams by connecting them with their community and individual purpose. These Circles can reduce conflict and workplace stressors and will decrease the need for organization leaders to look outside its own members for resources needed to reach success. Organizations have used Circles for strategic planning, conflict resolution, organization retreats, conflict resolution, team and trust building and for transitioning changes in management or organizational direction.

### **What are different types of Circles? Just a few include:**

- Talking or Topic Circles – Participants explore a certain issue or topic from many different perspectives. Talking circles allow many voices to be heard and offer participants a diversity of perspectives to stimulate options & reflection.
- Community Building Circles – Create bonds and build relationships among a group of people who have a shared interest. Community building circles support effective collective action and mutual responsibility.
- Circles of Understanding or Conflict Circles – These Circles bring together disputing parties or differing opinions to resolve or better understand differences or conflicts. The purpose is to address conflict & develop a complete picture of the context or reason for a particular event or behavior.



- Celebration Circles – These Circles bring together a group of people to recognize an individual or a group and to share joy and a sense of accomplishment.
- Healing or Support Circles – The purpose is to share the pain of a person or persons who have experienced trauma or loss, or support an individual or group of individuals encountering a major life change or transition. These Circles often meet regularly over a period of time or as needed by the participants.

### **What does a Circle look like? Important features participants will experience:**

Time- Each Circle takes approximately 2 to 3 hours. The Circle Process can not be hurried. This point is often frustrating or anxiety producing for individuals with busy schedules. The simple answer to these frustrations is “How long does it take to build community?” We would encourage participants to trust the process and see what just a few hours in Circle can do for their organization.

Meeting Space- Circles should take place in locations where outside disruption is minimal and participants will be comfortable. Circle participants typically meet in an office or location where a large circle of chairs can be comfortably spaced with no large table or other obstruction between the participants. This setting intrigues participants and further helps to signal a coming together that is distinct from a traditional meeting.

Open/Close in a Good Way- Circle is sacred space and it is important to open and close Circles in a *good* way. Groups use quotes, poems, mission statements or quiet moments to mark the beginning & closing of a gathering that is not “business as usual”.

Talking Piece- A talking piece is used to encourage deep listening and respect between the participants. The talking piece is passed from person to person in the Circle.

Creating Guidelines- It is important for Circle participants to agree on Guidelines for their discussions. Guidelines are created by the Circle participants and implemented through consensus. Guidelines are a core tool in the Circle process and group facilitation.

Keepers- a Circle keeper is someone who has participated in Circle & has been trained in the Circle process. Keepers are responsible for guiding participants and creating and holding Circle as a sacred and safe place.

Vision and Purpose- The purpose and vision behind holding Circle is important. Circles can be held for many different reasons and for different time lengths. Some Circles will be a one time Circle in order to show appreciation for a departing co-worker. Other Circles may go on throughout a year or a period of time for community building, visioning or conflict resolution purposes.

**We hope you will contact the Circle Center today to find out about Circle facilitation and training opportunities in your area.**