

Session 7 – Restorative Circles: Community Values & Guidelines

Material

- Agenda charted on the board or chart paper, or provided as a handout
- A meaningful talking piece
- Item(s) to start building a meaningful centerpiece
- AV equipment to play the video: [Turning to One Another](#)
- Multi-colored index cards
- Handout: "Key Elements of a Circle"
- Handout: "Circles Tree"

Note for the Facilitator/Circle Keeper: Today you'll start co-creating your centerpiece. Consider bringing a nice piece of cloth or other item(s) to mark the centerpiece you'll be working on today. Circle keepers have used scarves, necklaces, plants, (electronic) candles, and other meaningful items to mark the center of their circle. Today you'll be building the centerpiece by inviting participants to contribute their Values and Guidelines on index cards. Like last time, make sure you bring a meaningful talking piece to facilitate today's circle.

Opening Ceremony: Turning to One Another

Explain that similar to last time, you'll open today's circle with a poem. Distribute the handout of the poem, "Turning to One Another" by Margaret Wheatley. Either invite people to read along as you:

- Play the video of Morningside Center's Senior Program Manager, Daniel Coles, reading the poem out loud at [Turning to One Another](#)
- Have participants read the poem out loud, collaboratively, by going around the circle and inviting participants to read up to a line each.

Having listened to and/or read the poem collaboratively, invite participants to review the poem for a minute or two and then pick a line that resonates with them.

Go-Round:

Send a talking piece around, inviting participants to share the line they picked and why.



Talk Participants Through Today's Agenda

- Opening Ceremony: "Turning to One Another"
- Check Agenda
- Review Circle Elements, Tier 1 and 2
- Values, Guidelines and Agreements
- Closing Ceremony: Reflections on Son of Baldwin Quote

Review Circle Elements, Tier 1 and 2

Ask participants what we remember about the key elements of the circle process from last time. Referencing the "Circles Tree" handout, elicit and review the elements you covered last time, adding three more (highlighted below) that we'll be working on today:

- The Structure of the Circle/Sitting in a Circle
- Opening Ceremony
- The Centerpiece
- The Talking Piece
- Identifying Values
- Generating Guidelines
- Guiding Prompts/Questions for Storytelling
- Closing Ceremony

Values & Guidelines

According to circle keeper, Kay Pranis:

"Peacemaking Circles use structure to create possibilities for freedom: freedom to speak our truth, freedom to drop masks and protections, freedom to be present as a whole human being, freedom to reveal our deepest longings, freedom to acknowledge mistakes and fears, freedom to act in accord with our core values."

We need to build this structure with intentionality, which is what we'll be working on today as we develop our collective values and guidelines and start building our centerpiece. As we reviewed the last time we came together:

In circles we gather around a centerpiece, that serves as meaningful focal point for circle participants so they can be more fully present and bring their best self to the circle. Centerpieces may contain values, objects that serve as talking pieces, or other meaningful objects contributed by the community that is gathered around it.

- b. Values:** Invite participants to take a moment to think about a value that they believe to be important, a value that grounds them in their practice as a parent coordinator, a paraprofessional, a teacher, an administrator, a school aid, counselor, etc. A value that helps them to show up as their best self. Invite participants to write that value on an index card.

Go-Round

Send a talking piece around, inviting participants to share their value and explain why they chose that value

Note to the Facilitator/Circle Keeper: If no one contributes “confidentiality” as a circle value, make sure to do so. Agreeing to keep people’s personal experiences confidential can encourage people to show up and share of themselves more fully in circles.

Circles Tree

Referencing the “Key Elements of a Circle” handout once more, touch on the fact that shared values are a key component of healthy communities. They help to ground us collectively. They are part of the root system that helps guide us in our social interactions. It is for this reason that when first establishing your circle practice in your school, it is critical to discuss values within your community and with the community you build with your students.

- b. Practices (Guidelines):** Next, invite participants to think about what their value looks like in practice. Write the practice(s) on the other side of the index card, as participants consider community practices (guidelines) that can support them, and others in the circle, to show up as their best selves in this space.

For instance, if their value is patience, the practice might be “slowing down and be being fully present with each other.” If their value is respect, their practice might be “listening

mindfully (wholeheartedly) when others are speaking” and “using invitational language.” If their value is equity, their practice might be “honoring and making space for all voices” or “stepping up and stepping back.” “Courage” might require me to “speak my truth,” “lean into my discomfort,” and “keep breathing,” while “staying present.”

Go-Round

Send the talking piece around, inviting participants to share the practice (guideline) they'd like the group to abide by as they build their circle community. Having shared their practice (guideline), invite participants to contribute their index cards to the centerpiece.

Chart the practices (guidelines) as well, for all to see on chart paper. Introduce them as a work in progress. You may add that these practices (guidelines) are aspirational, in that they help guide us to work on being our best selves in circle (and in the community at large), recognizing that we are human and, like our students, we'll have good and bad days and we'll not always show up as our best selves.

Circle Agreements

Before wrapping up this part of the process, ask if this set of practices (guidelines) is something participants can agree to work toward. If so, rename them to be your “Circle Agreements.” If there is no consensus, open up a dialogue. Discuss the practices that people don't agree on, inviting different voices and understandings into the space. Edit your practices (guidelines), as needed, to allow for consensus before moving on.

Explain that circle guidelines should be seen as a work in progress that we'll continue revisiting to make sure they remain relevant as we deepen our work in Circle together.

Large Group Discussion

If time allows, facilitate a conversation about why it might be important to establish guidelines for classroom circle discussions collaboratively with students and staff.

Closing Ceremony

Share the following [#SonofBaldwin tweet](#) as an addition to the guidelines created by your team:



Son of Baldwin (Robert Jones, Jr.)

@SonofBaldwin



We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.

10:19 AM · Aug 18, 2015 · Twitter Web Client

9,729 Retweets **689** Quote Tweets **17.5K** Likes



Ask how participants feels about this tweet as you close out today's session. Invite them to share any thoughts, feelings, or connections.

Additional Resources: Session 7

Additional Written Resources:

["Respect Differences?: Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education"](#)
by Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo

Additional Video Resources:

["Revisiting Classroom Rules" from Responsive Classroom](#)

["Fostering Belonging With Classroom Norms" from Edutopia](#)

Handout: Key Elements of a Circle



Key Elements of a Circle

The structure of the circle



Centerpiece



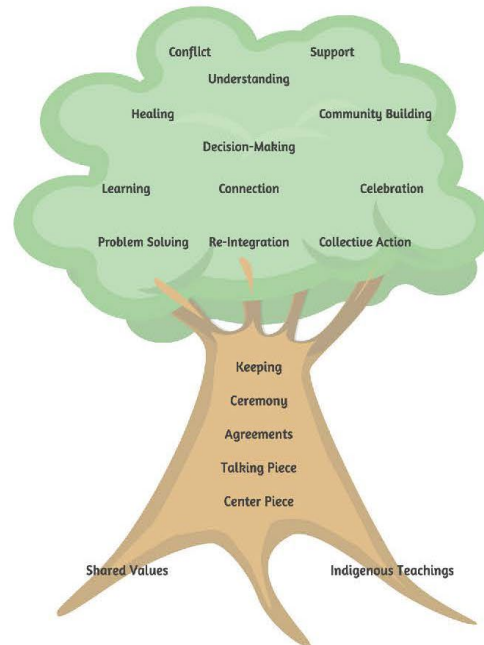
Talking piece (globe, figurine)

Opening and closing ceremonies

Values (see centerpiece image of index cards)

Community practices, guidelines, agreements

Role of the keeper



Handout: Circles Tree

