

Introduction to Circle Script

The following script can be used when introducing a circle to a group for the first time. It includes additional explanations of circle elements that may not be familiar to people who have not experienced a circle before.

Welcome: Welcome everyone. Thank you for being here today to participate in this restorative circle. I will introduce the basic elements of what creates the space for restorative dialogue, and then we will have a chance to respond to some open questions that will allow us to share honestly, as well as listen to others. This type of circle helps to deepen community connections by promoting a more complete understanding of who we each are in our own unique lives.

Awareness Moment: First, I would like us to take a moment to become fully present to ourselves and each other here and now. Letting go of thoughts and feelings about other things in other places, we will take a moment to sit in silence and center ourselves in whatever way feels comfortable to you.

Circle Opening: Now, I would like to formally open the circle space. This opening is meant to set the tone for our time sharing together and to help us transition into a place of receptivity where there is a greater possibility for connection with others. (*Select circle opening*).

Talking Piece: The first feature of the restorative circle space I want to introduce to you is the talking piece. The talking piece can be any kind of handheld object that can be passed from person to person. We use a talking piece to assure that each person has an equal opportunity to share and to be heard. Whoever is holding the talking piece is the one who has the right to speak, while everyone else listens silently.

Centerpiece: Another important element of the restorative circle space is the centerpiece. The centerpiece helps to provide a focus point for the circle participants. The objects that compose the centerpiece often have some kind of symbolic value, so they evoke a space in which people can interact from their core values and connect from their depth. All circle participants are welcome to contribute an object to help form the centerpiece. This instills a sense of shared responsibility to keep the circle space open and respectful. It is also a visible commitment to engage with the circle from a place of truth and authenticity.

Circle Values: Now, I would like for all of us to take a moment to remember our circle values. These values are core qualities that are important to us and help

us to bring our best selves when we sit together in circle. Our circle values are (*name circle values*).

Circle Guidelines: Finally, there are four circle guidelines that I would like us all to practice during our time in circle together to help us communicate with openness, honesty, and respect:

1. **Speak from the heart:** Speak from your direct experience, knowing that your experience has truth and value.
2. **Listen from the heart:** Listen with an attitude of unconditional respect for whatever a person brings to the circle.
3. **Trust the process:** Allow your contribution to the circle to naturally unfold, without trying to conform to what you think others expect.
4. **Say just enough:** Without feeling rushed, choose your words carefully to convey the essence of your message. Ask yourself, how are my words serving the circle?

Can we all agree to practice these four guidelines while we are in circle together?

Are there any other agreements you would like to propose?

Check-in Round: Now I would like to pass the talking piece for a check-in round. *Introduce check-in question.* If you are uncomfortable responding, you always have the option to pass the talking piece without speaking.

Guiding Question Rounds or Relational Activity

Reflection Round: What was this circle experience like for you?

Circle Closing: Thank you all for sharing and listening. Now, I would like to formally close this circle. (*Select circle closing*).