

Restore Project Tool Kit



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Tool 3: Use of Circles

The effective use of circles is an important aspect of successful implementation of restorative practices.

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Critical Issues in Using Circles

- Circles can be related to course content or interpersonal.
- Circles help people take responsibility.
- Circles allow quiet voices to be heard.
- Circles allow leaders to emerge.
- Many people will say “I don’t know” or “can I pass”
- Make sure you have responses ready to these statements.
- The shape of the circle is important.
- Clear directions increase the likelihood of success.
- Leaders should model appropriate participation.
- Circles can help people explore issues on a deeper level.
- Circles encourage problem solving.
- Circles allow people to learn about each other and build relationships.

Using Circles with Students

Circle go-arounds are a great way to foster a sense of community among students. Also, they allow quieter voices to be heard and limit the amount of time that more talkative students have the floor. Arrange chairs in a circle (younger students may prefer to sit on the floor) and have students answer the question in turn. Frequently a “talking piece” helps students wait their turn and gives a physical reminder of who has permission to speak. These go-arounds can be used during a separate circle time, as an opening ritual for class discussions, or as tool to process a problem in class. Use one of the following questions or create your own. Remember to start with low risk questions until students get used to the format. Teachers should always answer the questions too. Have fun!

Say something nice about the person to your right.	What makes you sad? (happy?)
What is your favourite food?	What is your favourite colour?
What is your favourite TV show?	If I could be any animal, I would be...
What makes a good friend?	Tell about a favourite holiday.
Tell something fun you did last weekend.	What is your favourite thing to do?
What do you do well?	Why should people follow the rules?
How do you feel when someone laughs at you?	Name someone in this class who helped you this week.
What do you want to be when you grow up?	I like summer because...
What is your favourite room in your house?	Who do you trust?
What do you like about this class? (or school)	What is something you know how to do that you didn't know how to do last year?
Name a student who worked hard today?	Your choice???

Remember to praise students for their participation – even if they struggle. Resistance (silliness, refusing to talk, interrupting, etc.) is usually a result of fear and will go away quickly if it is dealt with immediately in a firm but caring way.

Using Circles to Respond to Incidents

When an incident occurs that affects a group of students or an entire class, a circle go-around is an effective tool for engaging the students in a discussion to resolve the issue. While not required, it is preferable for the students to already have experienced lower-risk circles. It is sometimes helpful to have any identified “offenders” make some preliminary statements accepting responsibility.

The circle should be used to address two critical questions:

- 1. What harm has been caused?**
- 2. What needs to happen to make things right?**

Older students may simply be able to answer these questions but for many students, particularly in lower grades, the following questions may be helpful.

What have you thought about since the incident?

How do you feel about what happened?

What has been the hardest part of this for you?

Who has been affected by this incident?

How have they been affected?

How did your parents react when they heard what happened?

What was your part in the problem?

What needs to happen to make things right?

What can we do to make sure this doesn't happen again?

How have you felt in the past when you were teased? Or whatever the incident was

If the circle has one or two identified offenders be sure to praise them publicly for their courage in dealing with the incident in such a public way. Always look for ways to reintegrate them and allow them to reclaim their good name in the class.

Effective Use of Circles

Learn the value and process of circles—practical and effective tools for creating a positive classroom climate in Schools (both Secondary and Primary), Looked After Children settings (LAC) and other group working situations, which you will be able to use immediately.

Benefits

- circles can be used, with a modest time investment, to:
 - create a positive classroom/care community
 - manage classroom/care setting behaviour
 - engage students/LAC and their parents/carers in their own behavioural issues and academic/vocational progress
- circles teach students/LAC:
 - that their classroom/care setting is a community
 - how to build trust
 - to support each other's learning/growth/connectedness
 - to hold each other accountable

Focus

- circle techniques and ideas
- what circles can accomplish
- how circles can be restorative
- using circles to stimulate learning, growth, connectedness and discussion

Agenda & Materials

- participatory exercises to:
 - practice using circles
 - develop new circle applications and questions
- videos of restorative practices in use
- analysis of videos in the context of restorative philosophy
- discussion of key circle issues
- helpful materials to take home

This one-day course normally runs from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., though this is negotiable subject to minimum inputs and contents.

STANDALONE - FULL DAY – 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

EFFECTIVE USE OF CIRCLES AGENDA

9:00 – 9:30	REGISTRATION AND COFFEE
9:30 –	INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY
	BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL
	SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW
	RESTORATIVE PRACTICES CONTINUUM
– 11:15	TYPES OF CIRCLES
11:15 – 11:30	<u>BREAK</u>
11:30 –	DEMONSTRATION CIRCLE
– 12:55	CIRCLE SCENARIOS
12:55 – 1:45	<u>LUNCH</u>
1:45 –	PROBLEM SOLVING CIRCLES
	ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE WINDOW AND IMPLEMENTATION
	IIRP SERVICES
– 3:30	Q&A/EVALUATIONS/FINAL GO ROUND
3:30	CLOSE OF TRAINING