

*This is a series of Circles done with a group of 28 people (including teacher, students and circle keeper) in a high school class about three months after the beginning of the school year. The class had not yet done any direct community building, and was experiencing some challenges with a sense of issues not being openly addressed. The class had not sat in Circle before this. The Circles were done over four consecutive days, the first three in periods of about 50 minutes, and the last during the first 30 minutes of the period.*

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## **First Circle**

### Before Circle:

- Arrange Center on stage: cloth, electric candle and?
- (no chairs - will sit on floor)
- Talking piece - copy of play
- Set out markers, paper plates (30), small candles (30)

### Circle Agenda

- Opening
  - light [main] candle
  - quote
    - Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.  
Geroge Bernhard Shaw
  - introduce myself
  - why we're here
    - **to have an experience we're not prepared for so we can practice being truthfully in the moment**
    - **to make sure everyone feels heard and understands his/her significant value to the class and beyond, so we can take it out into the world**
- Introduce talking piece & procedure
  - what it means
  - how we will use it - speaking/expressing, listening
    - pass it around silently & each light small candle as we go
  - ok to step away and return to circle if need to use restroom, etc.?
  - questions?
- Check-in
  - **Now we'll do a check-in. Make yourself comfortable. In a moment I'll ask you to close your eyes if you want, and take a few deeper breaths and, then check to see how you're feeling, and create a simple gesture or movement that expresses how you feel. For example, if I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_, so I might do this. Then we will all do it. Q's?**
  - Guide the activity
  - *Q - say your name and how you're feeling, and show your gesture*
- Values in Circle
  - **The purpose of this activity is to allow us to identify and agree on values that are important to each of us and which we would like to see everyone honor during our Circle.**
  - Activity

- **here are markers and paper**
  - **on one side of the plate write down five (5) values that are important to you, such as honesty or integrity, etc.**
  - **choose and circle three of the five which are most important to you**
  - **choose one of the three, the most important one to you, and write down that value on the other side of the paper**
- *Q1 - what value would you like to offer for our space together, and why? (Then place your paper in the center)*
- *Q2: does anyone have any questions about any of these values?*
- *Q3: can all of us as a group honor all these values while we are in Circle*
  
- Reflecting on Circle Experience
  - *Q - What is [one word to describe] something I can take away from the Circle?*
  - *if extra time Q - What is a question that you would like to address in a future Circle together?*
  
- Closing:
  - quote:
 

**“Follow your bliss. If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while waiting for you, and the life you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, and they open the doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be. If you follow your bliss, doors will open for you that wouldn't have opened for anyone else.” — [Joseph Campbell](#)**
  - “blow out” candles together

## Second Circle

### Before Circle:

- Arrange Center: cloth, electric candles, centerpiece – “Ubuntu” piece
- Talking piece
- time piece

### Circle Agenda

- Opening
  - light big candle
  - quote: **Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.** *Bertrand Russell*
  - *a brief word about why I'm participating in the Circle*
  - focus on why we're here: **to build on yesterday's Circle, exploring this new experience, and considering our experience in this class to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard and understand their value to the class and beyond**
- Check-in
  - Centering with breath. Light small candles together, take a breath and place in center
  - Reminder re. talking piece
- Values in Circle
  - **Yesterday we identified values that are important to each of us and which we would like to see everyone honor during our Circle. The plates we made are here as a reminder.**
  - **As we go forward today, let's check to see if anyone has any questions or concerns about these values and then make a decision about whether we agree to honor them during our Circle. In Circle we make decisions by consensus, which means that everyone has an opportunity to be heard until we reach agreement, so I'm going to pass the talking piece.**
  - **Q - Do you have any questions or concerns about any of these values in our Circle?** (if yes, we will come back to you once the talking piece has gone around...)
    - **[Q - What are your questions or concerns? What would you like to see happen?]**
  - **Q- Can we agree to honor these values in our Circle?**
- Topic Discussion
  - **Q - How is your experience in this class socially, artistically, and/or academically? What works, what doesn't work, and/or what would you like to see happen?**
- Reflecting on Circle Experience
  - **Q- In a word or two, what will you take away from our Circle today?**
- Closing:
  - quote: **He drew a circle that shut me out -- Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win: We drew a circle that took him in.** *Edwin Markham*

blow out candles together

### Third circle

#### Before Circle:

- Arrange Center: cloth, electric candles, centerpiece – “Ubuntu” piece, flowers
- Talking piece
- time piece

#### Circle Agenda

- Opening
  - light big candle
  - quote: “**Forgiving is not forgetting; its actually remembering--remembering and not using your right to hit back. It’s a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don’t want to repeat what happened.**” – [Desmond Tutu](#)
  - *a brief word about why I’m participating in the Circle*
  - focus on why we’re here: **to build on our last two Circles, and consider our current experience in this class to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard and understand their value to the class and beyond**
  - **Reminders re. talking piece, passing, voluntariness of Circle, and OK to step away if needed**
- Check-in
  - Centering with breath. Light small candles together
  - **If my current mood were weather it would be \_\_\_\_\_.** Place candle in center
- Values in Circle
  - **In our previous Circles, we identified values that are important to each of us and which we would like to see everyone honor during our Circle. The plates we made are here as a reminder. I think we’ve agreed to honor these values as best we can, adding three values at the end of that discussion: hope, presence and trust. If anyone understands this differently will you say so now?**
  - **A note going forward: If at any time you’d like to add anything on this - or any other - subject you can do that when you have the talking piece.**
- Topic Discussion
  - Today we’ll continue our Circle, with the following question:
  - **Q - How is your experience in this class socially, artistically, and/or academically? What works? What doesn’t work? What would you like to see happen?**
  - **Having begun yesterday to address this question and his reasons for raising it, [teacher] will begin... Our plan is to have at least two rounds so we have opportunity to both deepen our sharing and to talk about what arises in us as we listen.**
- Reflecting on Circle Experience
  - **Q- In a word or two, what will you take away from our Circle today?**
- Closing:
  - quote: “**Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realize our need of one another.**” – [Desmond Tutu](#)
  - blow out candles together

## Fourth circle

### Before Circle:

- Arrange Center: cloth, electric candles, values plates
- Talking piece - Yarn
- time piece

### Circle Agenda

- Opening
  - light big candle
  - quote: **Turning to One Another** (Heart of Hope, page 315)  
**There is no greater power than a community  
Discovering what it cares about.  
Ask, “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?”  
Keep asking.  
Notice what you care about.  
Assume that many others share your dreams.  
Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.  
Talk to people you know.  
Talk to people you don’t know.  
Talk to people you never talk to.  
Be intrigued by the differences you hear.  
Expect to be surprised.  
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.  
Invite everybody to work on what’s possible.  
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.  
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.  
Remember, you don’t fear people who’s story you know.  
Real listening always brings people closer together.  
Trust that meaningful conversations can change the world.  
Rely on human goodness.  
Stay together.  
Margaret Wheatly**
  - focus on why we’re here: **to close our Circle, to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard and understand their value to the class and beyond**
- Check-in
  - Centering with breath. Light small candles together
- a few words from [teachaer]
- Topic Discussion
  - Yarn toss across/around the Circle
  - **Q - *Something you bring to this class is* \_\_\_\_\_.**
- Closing:
  - quote: **We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Martin Luther King Jr.**
  - blow out candles together

[class took photo of circle holding the yarn web we wove & then hung yarn on “wall of love” bulletin board in classroom]