

Burlington City & Lake Semester - Circle Practice

Premises:

- One's experience in a group has a significant impact on individuals' learning, total experience, and readiness to take risks
- Groups require deliberate investment. Without that investment, groups are at best just individuals, or smaller groups with shifting alliances.
- The goal is not that everyone become best friends. It is--at a minimum--presence, belonging, and wellness.
- All groups go through stages (Forming, Transition, Working)
- Group process helps make the group's evolution more meaningful, transparent, inclusive, and empowering
- Groups *may* grow into healthy organizations on their own--but facilitation helps
- Experience itself does not lead to learning. Meaning-making (from that experience) leads to learning

Purpose:

Circle is a place to

- Nurture connection and belonging
- Be present
- Provide a compartmentalized space for the feelings and meaning that don't "have a home" in business meetings and day-to-day interactions
- Learn about group process, and to reflect on oneself in a group
- Make personal meaning, reflecting and growing as a person
- Air and share things that are challenging or uncomfortable, safe in knowing that the group will hold that frustration--and help it evolve
- Find humor, lightness, and hope

Basic Norms:

- Be present
- Listen to learn
- Respond to ideas, not to people
- Challenge by choice
- Value yourself, value the group, value the circle
 - Tone, Care, Confidentiality

General Flow:

- Sharing ("Connections")
 - For students, this is wide open. Anything is welcome.
 - It can't turn into a discussion though.
- Activity (one or two activities)
- Reflection
- Business

Circle Practice Examples:

Group Stage	Activity
<i>Icebreaker</i>	The winds blow for...
<i>Icebreaker</i>	Two truths and a lie
<i>Forming</i>	Sentence-stem: "I am hoping to _____" // "One thing I'm looking forward to is _____"
<i>Forming</i>	Sentence-stem: "One thing you should know about me is _____"
<i>Forming</i>	"One thing I hope to contribute to this group is _____"
<i>Forming==>Norming</i>	Sentence-stem: "Something I've Learned..." // "Something I want to try..."
<i>Forming==>Norming</i>	Affirmations ("One thing that I appreciate about _____ is...") <i>On sticky-notes → on backs (with taped-paper)</i>
<i>Norming</i>	Sentence-stem: "One thing I contribute to this group..." & "One thing I might work on to be a better community member"
<i>Norming</i>	"One way that this kind of learning ("doing school this way") is working for me is _____" & "One way I find it challenging is _____"
<i>Norming</i>	Sentence-stem: "I used to be... I am... I want to be..."
<i>Working</i>	Letter to self
<i>Working</i>	Sentence-stem: "One thing I'm aware of..."
<i>Working</i>	Sentence-stem: "One thing I've challenged myself to do..." // "One risk I've taken..." OR "One risk I've taken..." & "My next challenge is..."
<i>Ending</i>	Sentence-stem: "One thing I'm taking away..." & "One thing I'm leaving..."
<i>Ending</i>	Pair-Share: "How might you help others understand this experience when you return to school? How will you describe this semester?"
<i>Ending</i>	Write and share... "One thing I'm expecting to go back to..." ("What I'm expecting the return to school will be like...")