

Circle Principles and Guidelines



The following are some suggestions for creating a successful circle:

- Create sacred space. This includes physically preparing a space to accommodate the participants in a circle, usually with a centerpiece or altar.
- Listen with compassion and for wisdom. This includes listening without an agenda, suspending judgment, being curious and finding the underlying meaning in others' statements. Also, it is listening for wisdom as it comes through each participant.
- Speak from your heart and experience. Speak one at a time. This includes saying what is true for you and speaking to the center of the circle, not to another individual. We offer our experience and feelings to the circle, not our advice. Also, we speak one at a time and invoke a talking piece when needed, to ensure that all are heard.
- Invite silence and reflection when needed, in you and in the circle. This includes listening to our own inner guidance before speaking. Also, we request silence and reflection in the circle when we feel it is needed.
- Take responsibility for your experience and your impact on the circle. This includes demonstrating self-respect and self-restraint. We self-monitor to ensure that our needs and expectations are being met. We ensure our contribution adds to the positive experience of all in the circle.
- Keep the confidence of the circle. This refers to our confidentiality agreements. What is spoken in the circle, stays in the circle to help ensure a safe environment for sharing our experiences and feelings.
- Make decisions, when needed, by consensus. This refers to our decision-making process. Should a circle need to make a decision, it is generally desirable to come to a consensus. These guidelines can be used as a starting point for group agreements in any circle, knowing that each group will add or delete as they see fit.
- No fixing. Sometimes we need to be heard and given space for self-realization that one cannot find out in the world elsewhere. If someone tears up, refrain from grabbing a tissue for them. Honor their emotions. For too long we have been told it's wrong or uncomfortable to show or be shown true feelings. Tears are healthy and cleansing. Allow them to flow with compassion, yet it's not your work to control them.

Additional Principles

Set intention with your circle before beginning. Create a foundation for understanding. Sometimes this is reading the bullet points below, reminding everyone and yourself why you are there. It's a good idea to get everyone's agreement to the Circle Principles and ask for any questions. (Ideal for your first circle together but a good practice.)

When in Circle

- Consider it sacred
- Consider opening and closing the circle with some form of reverence; lighting a candle, offering an inspiration or prayer
- Celebrate diversity and honor one another's beliefs and customs
- Honor confidentiality
- Honor all voices and allow ample time to a thought to be fully expressed
- We practice not "fixing" or unsolicited advice
- Allow grief to surface uninterrupted
- Listen for understanding
- Invite diverse points of view
- When invited, offer experience rather than advice
- Speak with integrity and for yourself