

# Circle Principles

by Jean Shinoda Bolin from The Millionth Circle

[www.millionthcircle.org](http://www.millionthcircle.org)

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.

## Additional Principles

- Set intention with your circle before beginning. Create a foundation for understanding. Sometimes this is just a sentence to remind everyone why they were invited. It's a good idea to get everyone's agreement to the Circle Principles and ask for any questions. (usually ideal for your first circle together but a good practice.)