

# Circle Practice

## Deepening Community Conversation & Understanding



**Description:** The circle is the basic form underlining all other forms of participatory process. In every type of organisation or group, we meet in circles (even if they are around a boardroom table) to plan for the future, handle crisis, and listen to each other. Beginning and ending meetings in a circle helps the process if participants can “check in” at the beginning about why they are participating, and “check out” at the end by reflect on what was accomplished. Meeting in a circle can be especially helpful when getting to know each other and the issue at hand, or as a means for deep reflection or consensus making.



### Target/Purpose

**Target:** Co-designing a community, space, event or organisation

**Purpose:** to learn learn from each other, surface (diverse) perspectives and see what is ‘at the centre’



### Requirements

- Circles in a chair
- A talking piece
- Bells



### Output

Collective seeing



### Time

20-90 minutes

## Step 1

Preparation:

- Set the Intention.
- Share your thoughts with other people.
- Envision the Circle which is carrying out your defined intention.
- Identify and invite your participants.

## Step 2

Prepare the Space:

Arrange chairs in a circle.  
 Introduce the talking piece and guardian (and bells if you are using them).  
 Frame the time, intentions, and process.

## Step 3

Share the Circle Practice:

- Speak with intention.
- Listen with attention.
- Care for the whole.

## Step 4

Allow the conversation to flow - clockwise or popcorn style - as the talking piece travels.

## Step 5

### Keep Track of Commitments:

- Create and Maintain a circle logbook.
- Use 'harvest tools' to record experiences.
- Bring logbook to next session (if applicable).

## Step 6

### Managing Discomfort:

- Speak with intention.
- Listen with attention.
- Care for the whole.

## Step 7

### Decision making in a circle:

- Ensure a talking piece is going round.
- Use a signal-vote.

## Step 8

### Closure:

- Revisit confidentiality issues and what may be shared.
- Reflect on lessons learned and experience gained.
- Designate time, place and host for next meeting (if applicable).
- Close the circle with gratitude for all that was said.

### Resources:

- **Peer Spirit The Circle Way:** <http://www.thecircleway.net/> and The Circle Way process: <http://www.thecircleway.net/the-process>
- The Circle Way pocket guide: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55597e72e4b0f7284bff49e0/t/584b5a7d37c58174c5fddf14/1481333377770/The+Circle+Way+Pocket+Guide.pdf>

### Successful Cases:

- **Using circle practice in the classroom:** <https://www.edutopia.org/article/using-circle-practice-classroom>
- Examples of the Circle Way applied: <http://www.thecircleway.net/articles/2017/11/27/a-year-in-review>
- Citizen Circles for Social Enterprise: <http://www.citizencircles.com/explore-topics/social-enterprise/>