



Conducting a Circle Process

1. Opening comments by circle facilitator/keeper
 - Set a relaxed and open tone
 - Welcome everyone and create a friendly atmosphere
 - Explain the purpose of the talking circle: how this process we have learned from the wisdom of numerous indigenous cultures, most specifically Native American, will be used to create a safe and respectful place for sharing our thoughts and feelings
 - Present 5 basic ground rules: 1) Listen with respect; 2) Each person gets a chance to talk; 3) One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off; 4) Speak for yourself and not as the representative of any group; 5) It's OK to disagree, but no name-calling or attacking.
 - Ask for additional thoughts about ground rules
 - Explain about the talking piece: 1) The talking piece will be passed around the circle and everyone will get a turn; 2) Only the person holding the piece can speak; 3) You do not have to say anything when it is your turn. If for some reason you do not feel comfortable or able to speak, simply pass the talking piece to the next person.
2. First pass of talking piece: introductions
3. Second pass: first questions to reflect on
4. Third pass: second questions to reflect on
5. Fourth pass: third question (if time allows)
6. Facilitate open discussion/dialogue on developing a plan to repair the harm, without talking piece
7. Closing comments and thanks for participant contributions

The circle process has been brought into European culture by many over the years, including community activists in the restorative justice movement and activists in the feminist movement, most notably Christine Baldwin, author of Calling the Circle, The First and Future Culture, 1998, Bantam Books. Another excellent resource is The Little Book of Circle Processes by Kay Pranis, 2005, GoodBooks.