

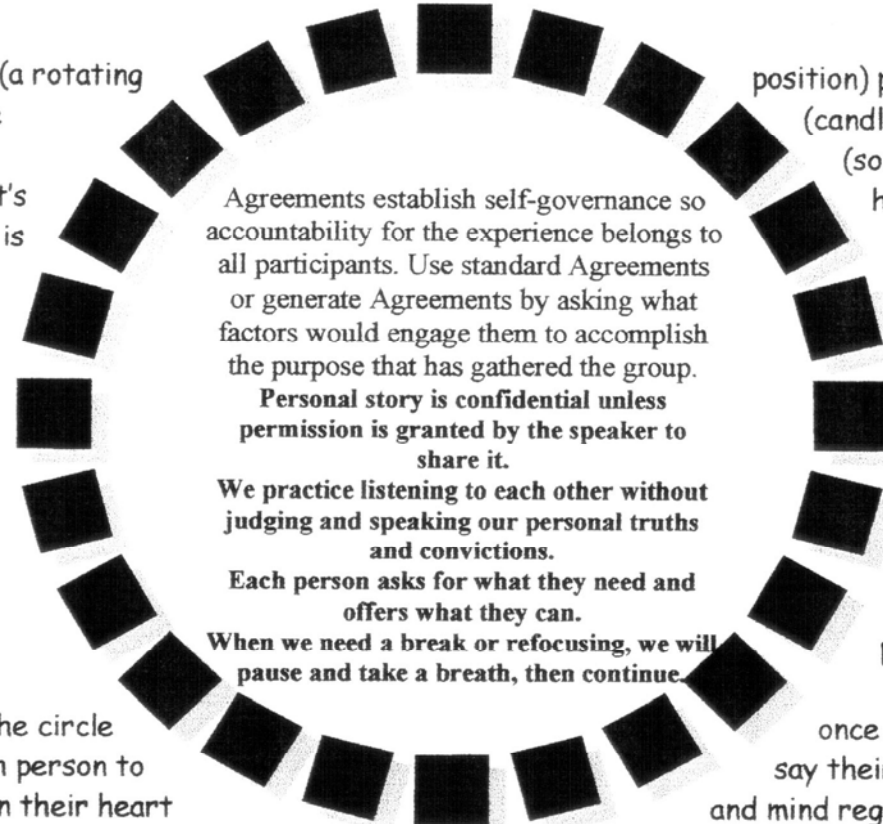
HOW TO CALL A CIRCLE IN ANY COMMUNITY OR PROFESSIONAL SETTING

Developed for the Association of Leadership Educators Conference

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adapted from *Calling the Circle, the First and Future Culture* (Bantam)

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- Circle host (a rotating centerpiece object or just what's by whoever is in the position) provides a (candle, flower) and an (something symbolic handy) to be held speaking.
 - Circle host everyone, circle and sets If there's question, for a silence to become welcomes reads the agreements an ending time. a theme or state it. Call moment of relax, reflect and present. Breathe.
 - Go around the circle inviting each person to to what is on their heart (pass if you like). Remarks should be succinct to allow time for everyone to share introductions. Pass the talking object. Avoid feedback, response or cross-talk.
 - Go around the circle again, giving each person another chance to speak without feedback, response or cross-talk. This round allows more time for each person to explore their thoughts, feelings, reactions in an orderly pattern of response. If someone wants to respond to another person's comments they can do so in their own turn or when the circle is opened for conversation. Use the talking object.
 - Set the talking-piece down and open to conversation council. Keep in mind the agreements. (Watch the time factor so there is time to close. Call for and utilize pauses: brief moments when silence re-centers the group and refreshes the dialogue.)
 - To close, go around the circle again, giving each person a chance to say briefly what they have received or learned from the conversation or appreciate each other. End with a moment of silence, or any appropriate signal of completion (poem, bell ringing, etc.)
- Agreements establish self-governance so accountability for the experience belongs to all participants. Use standard Agreements or generate Agreements by asking what factors would engage them to accomplish the purpose that has gathered the group.
- Personal story is confidential unless permission is granted by the speaker to share it.**
- We practice listening to each other without judging and speaking our personal truths and convictions.**
- Each person asks for what they need and offers what they can.**
- When we need a break or refocusing, we will pause and take a breath, then continue.**

The whole circle process can happen in 20 to 90 minutes. If the group is larger than 10, divide. Use large group methodologies to gather insights if needed in the situation.

Why the circle is the conversational process for leadership and citizenship

A circle is not just a meeting with the chairs rearranged. Circle is a return to an original form of human community, as well as a leap forward to create a new form of community. The use of circle is based on the methodology of PeerSpirit developed in the 1990's by Christina Baldwin & Ann Linnea, and articulated in Baldwin's book, *Calling the Circle, the First and Future Culture*. Calling the circle is a declaration of readiness to link where we came from, where we are, and where we may go.

About 400,000 years ago, when humans captured the spark of fire and began to carry the embers along from site to site, a new way of being came around the flame. Coming together at dusk, they found shelter for the night and brought the safety of the light with them. They found that with fire they could sustain more people, provide more food, and extend the offer of community. Something happened then: our ancestors took a great leap toward community, consciousness, and conversation. Somewhere in our minds and bodies is a link between the leap we need to make now, and these ancestral sources. We know there is another way to live; we are searching for our culture, the culture of the circle. To come into a circle is the choice to remove oneself from the middle, and to place something else there, around which we, and those who journey with us, can gather. Every circle, from the first campfire to the United Nations, asks for this commitment: to create a center that symbolizes the group's highest purpose and then to sit at the rim. Humans started here- facing the fire and tending

the needs of the community- and here is where we need to return- facing the burning questions of the times and tending to their solutions.

Three Practices of Council
We listen attentively
We speak intentionally
We contribute to the well-being of the group.

Three Principles of PeerSpirit
We rotate leadership
We share responsibility
We hold center by common intention

~ Excerpts from Calling the Circle, the First and Future Culture ~

Several actions set the circle in motion.

Members of a circle come together in a manner that honors their culture. Every voice is heard. For over a decade

PeerSpirit has reintroduced the use of circle to individuals, organizations, corporations,

religious institutions, government agencies, faculties and students. Our goal is to bring the circle into the mainstream of modern life, and to share applications of circle worldwide. Our experience leads us to believe that the circle fosters a unique quality of conversation. Around the world, people are remembering how to sit in conversational space with each other, a space that honours the spirit of the whole, practices interpersonal respect, and focuses our hearts and minds on areas of mutual concern.

Christina Baldwin & Ann Linnea

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