

Starting a Circle

The circle is the oldest form of social interaction. For a long time hierarchal structures replaced circular structures as the dominant leadership model for groups, as they were seen as the most efficient. However in today's world, circles are being re-discovered as the model that provides full participation and shared leadership, encourages creativity, demonstrates cooperation instead of competition and dominance, implements power-with instead of power-over, and reveals new solutions to old problems. Everyone is equally valued and equally shares. It is a spirit-filled time and place where collective creativity and wisdom is unleashed and nurtured. It is a place where there is a "relationships of reverence" that brings healing and empowerment.

When two or more are gathered together you are a circle. When you follow Circle Principles you are a sacred circle. Sacred circles are fun and give each one the courage and power to become fully themselves and to make a positive difference in the world.

1. **Dream the circle into reality.** When you dream it together and work together as equals your circle will grow.
 - Write down your dream to start a Circle and post it somewhere you will see it often or under your bed so you can dream on it. By giving attention to your dream, you will attract others to helping you bring it about.
 - Share your dream with others and invite them to join you in starting a circle.
 - Post a friendly announcement in local gathering places such as churches, synagogues, libraries, or Internet cafés. Circle Connections, Inc. will provide you with a flyer to post. They will also provide coaching and conference calls and other resources to help you gain the skills, self-confidence and courage to start your circle.
2. **Set a date, time and place for the first circle gathering.** Do it sooner rather than later. That very first meeting can be the most challenging to arrange. There may well be "conflicts" in your schedules, but find the time. Whenever you struggle to set a date, return to your written intention to start a Circle. Remember you and this work are important; when women gather together in a sacred circle something wonderful happens. The process is magical.
3. **Create a plan for calling the circle.** Circle Connections, Inc. will provide you with resources and encouragement in facilitating your first circle gathering.
4. **Circle Connections provides Magnificence of Circle trainings found on our website that can be brought to your community.** Having a critical number of people with the skills and dedication in starting and nurturing circles will transform old structures into circles.
5. **Devise your own rituals to open and close the circle.** A ritual can be as simple as each person introducing herself or himself and offering a short sentence of hopes for your Circle. This is known as a check-in. It is always best to start and end with check-ins and check-outs.
 - There are many kinds of rituals that you can use to honor sacred space. Lighting a candle, having several minutes of silence, reciting a prayer or poem, singing a song are just some of the ways. Using a "talking object" brings the conversation to a deeper level of sharing.

Whoever holds the “talking object” speaks from the heart while the others listen from the heart. The Native American “talking stick” is a sacred object that is always passed clockwise. Circle Connections staff will provide more information regarding the use of the “talking stick” and other rituals that bring about relationships of reverence.

- **Discuss among your friends and colleagues who will help facilitate your first meeting sharing the leadership.**
 - **Keep it simple.** After introductions talk about your collective dream for your circle and how you would like to begin and how often. We recommend once a week or every other week. Also talk about how many you want in your circle. Eight to 13 are good numbers for a women’s sacred circle. Meeting for two hours provide time for sharing and for exploring topics, books, rituals, spiritual practices, ideas for making a difference, etc. Meeting in a home provides privacy and comfort. Serving only tea or other cold and hot drinks makes it easy. Occasional gatherings with food make it celebratory. When you become a member of Circle Connections, you will be part of sharing and hearing from others all the things that make for successful circle gatherings.
 - **Sit in circle.** Place chairs or other forms of comfortable seating in a circle, where each face is seen and everyone can be heard. Put in the center of the circle sacred objects that nurture such as flowers, candles, stones, prayers, poetry, etc. Let the sacred objects change with each gathering.
 - **Present Circle Principles and add your own.**
 - Create sacred space
 - Speak one at a time
 - Promote open and honest communication
 - Listen actively without judgment
 - Offer experience instead of advice
 - Invite silence when in doubt or need
 - Share leadership and resources
 - Decisions by consensus
 - Start with check-ins, close with check-outs.
 - Make sure that all members are heard and are able to contribute fully. Every member becomes a leader and together they are all responsible for making the circle time meaningful for all.
6. **Name your circle and its purpose.** Decide by consensus the name and purpose of your circle. Naming is fun and it is powerful. We recommend you meet for a while and grow into a name that feels right for all of you.
 7. **Decide who will call the next circle, when and where such as every other Tuesday evening from 7-9PM at Ann’s house.**
 8. **The closing ritual,** check-outs, each person shares in a couple of words or a sentence how the circle experience was for them. This can be done before a song, poem, prayers, silence or afterwards.

You are not on your own. By becoming a member of Circle Connections you are part of a larger community that will continue to work together in making each circle a success. Your circle is important, it is one more circle in bringing about a critical number of circles that are and will make a positive difference in the world. Join us at <http://CircleConnections.com>