

Saturday School Circle Template

This circle is designed to offer the participants an opportunity to acknowledge harms they have caused, challenges they face and to develop a plan to address issues that have caused them to be at Saturday School.

The circle process lends itself to structure and respectful communication. This type of circle also helps to foster introspection and accountability and can help to develop a community where greater interaction, growth and learning may occur.

This circle should be held when enough time is available to utilize all of the activities. Please be aware that each activity is designed to make the circle a complete experience and the exclusion of any activity can lessen the effectiveness of the circle.

Preparation

1. Select an appropriate location to hold this circle.
2. Select a talking piece.
3. Collect all materials needed for the activities chosen for the circle and have them at hand.
4. Prior to the circle, put chairs in a circle.

Introduction to circle

When all Circle participants are ready to begin the Circle Keeper speaks:

“Today for Saturday School we will be meeting in circle to discuss why we are here, talk about how any harms you have caused may be repaired and hopefully to put in place steps to ensure that you don’t return.”

“Through this process we will get to know one another better, speak more honestly and respectfully to one another, get support when we need it, make decisions together and build a closer community”

Explain the Talking Piece

Choose a talking piece and hold it in your hand as you describe its purpose.

“For today’s discussion I would like to use a talking piece.”

“A talking piece put simply is a tool to ensure RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION. In circle, the person holding the talking piece is the only one talking while everyone else listens. After someone has had their say, they pass the talking piece to the person next to them until it makes its way around the circle. Participants will hold their questions, responses and comments until they hold the talking piece. Everyone has a chance to speak but you are not obligated to. You may pass on any round but I would like for everyone to participate in the check-in round at least.”

“In circle we do as much as we can by consensus. I would like to pass the talking piece and see if everyone can agree to using the talking piece today. If you can agree to the talking piece please say yes and pass it, if not please hold it and voice any questions or concerns so we can address them as a group.”

Pass the talking piece

What if someone won’t agree to using the talking piece?

It is ideal to have agreement to use the talking piece but it is not necessary. Do what you can to gain compliance and explain its purpose but if that doesn’t work the circle keeper make a decision whether or not to use it and move forward

Common questions and concerns about using the talking piece

- A. “I don’t understand why we need this”
- B. “To ensure everyone is respected. It’s so you get a chance to say what you need to without being talked over or interrupted”

- A. “I can’t hold it in. When I need to say something it just comes out”
- B. “We’ll all remind you. Do your best”

- A. “What do we do if people don’t respect the talking piece?”
- B. “We can decide as a group how to respond.”

Tip:

Ask a student that has participated in circle before to explain the talking piece.

Check-In

The check-in is an important part of the circle process. This is an opportunity for the circle keeper to find out if anyone in the group is having a difficult time or needs additional support. It also helps establish, build, and strengthen relationships.

Open ended check-in

“Let’s do a check-in. How are you doing today? I’m feeling a bit tired, I was up late grading papers...”

Pass the talking piece

If needed, pass the talking piece for another round

“I would like to pass the talking piece around again to give everyone a chance to respond to anything they might have heard shared that spoke to them. I agree with Ramon, he had a good point when he said...”

Pass the talking piece

Concentric Circles Activity

“I would like for us to play a game to get to know one another better before we begin our main activity...”

“We are going to split ourselves into two groups. So let’s count off 1, 2, 1,2... “

(The circle keeper starts as number 1 and participates in the circle if needed. If uneven number of participants, teacher sits out and can wander around the circle while students are participating)

“Everyone please stand up. I would like for the 1’s to turn and face the 2 standing to your left”.

The group forms pairs arranged in two circles with the inner circle facing a person in the outer circle. The Keeper will ask a question or give them a topic

Tips:

Participation:

Remind students that participation is voluntary. Don’t push it, but do share yourself in personal ways. This will help to create an environment of safety and encourage sharing.

Dealing with cross-talk:

For many, the circle process is a new way of engaging with one another. It is a way of listening and being heard that ensures mutual respect.

Because this is such a different approach to communication than many may be used to, it is expected that some will test the strength of the agreements made in circle.

Here’s what you might try if cross-talk becomes an issue in circle:

1. *Remind students of agreements to respect the talking piece.*
2. *If necessary re-do the consensus agreement.*
3. *Use more structured activities as opposed to talking rounds.*

to discuss. Each member of each pair will have a specific amount of time to respond and then the other member will speak to the topic. After each question, the circle keeper will ask the participants in the inner circle to take one step to the right so that they are facing a different person at the introduction of each question. The amount of time allowed is based on the time you have for Circle, the size of the group, and the seriousness or lightness of the topic. We usually start with light topics and small time allotments and then move into more thoughtful or serious topics that are relevant to the purpose of the circle and need more time.

“I am going to introduce a series of questions for you to ask one another. After each question I will ask the participants in the inner circle to take one step to the right so that you are talking to a different person at the beginning of each round. Please continue your conversation with the person facing you until I ask you to rotate and give you the next question to ask”.

1. *“What is your favorite TV program?”* (give participants about 30 seconds each- about one minute total). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
2. *“Your favorite food?”*(give participants about 30 seconds each). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
3. *“If you were an animal, what would you be?”* (give participants about 30 seconds each). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
4. *“If you could have a superpower, what power would you choose?”* (give participants about 30 seconds each). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
5. *“If you could meet anyone from history – real or fictional – who would you most like to spend a day with?”* (give participants about 1 minute each- 2

Tips:

Participation:

Remind students that participation is voluntary. Don't push it, but do share yourself in personal ways. This will help to create an environment of safety and encourage sharing.

Dealing with cross-talk:

For many the circle process is a new way of engaging with one another. It is a way of listening and being heard that ensures mutual respect. Because this is such a different approach to communication than many may be used to it is expected that some will test the strength of the agreements made in circle. Here's what you might try if cross-talk becomes an issue in circle:

4. Remind students of agreements to respect the talking piece.
5. If necessary re-do the consensus agreement.
6. Use more structured activities as opposed to talking rounds.

- minutes total). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
6. *“What is the best thing about you? Your greatest strength or asset?”* (give participants about 1 minute each- 2 minutes total). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
 7. *“What would you like to improve about yourself?”* (give participants about 1 minute each- 2 minutes total). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
 8. *“What does respect mean to you?”* (give participants about 2 minutes each- 4 minutes total). *“Inner circle participants please take one step to the right”*
 9. *“What does disrespect mean to you?”* (give participants about 2 minutes each- 4 minutes total). *“Please return to your seats after you finish your conversations”*

Ask the group what they thought about the activity and if they heard anything that really got their interest. The Circle keeper who facilitated the activity can start first, sharing anything he noticed or heard (like laughter, high energy, specific comments)

“How did that activity feel? Did you hear anything that was particularly interesting to you? Any other observations?”

Pass the talking piece

Respect Agreements

For this activity you will need index cards and pens or pencils for each participant and a whiteboard or large sheet of paper for the circle keeper to write on. Hand out the materials before beginning.

Discuss what respect means

“Today we will develop agreements on how we will treat one another to help everyone in our group feel respected. To begin the creation of our Values and Guidelines, I would like for each of us to share some of our experiences regarding respect”

“Please share a time you felt respected. Last year I received an award for...”

Pass the talking piece

“Please share a time you felt disrespected. About two months ago I was pulling into my driveway when my neighbor...”

Pass the talking piece

Share your requests for respect

“Next I’d like for us to create a set of agreements on how we would like to communicate with one another today. What do you need from everyone else here today to feel respected?”

“I would like to request for everyone to “Be honest”

Pass the talking piece

Write down the requests on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper. Ask participants to restate statements as guidelines when needed. Read the list aloud once everyone has had a chance to share.

“Is there anything on this list that anyone has questions about or would like clarity on? Address questions directly to the person that made the request.”

Pass the talking piece

(Be sure that everyone is clear on all of the requested guidelines)

Check for consensus on shared values and guidelines

“Is this a list of agreements we can agree upon for our classroom? If you can agree to this list give a thumbs up, if you need more clarity on a guideline hold your thumb in the middle and thumbs down if you cannot agree to a requested guideline for respect on this list”

Pass the talking piece, if needed, and discuss until the group comes to an agreement.

Accountability, Agreements and Support

This part of the process may start as a discussion in circle, individual restorative inquiries or both. Once participants have expressed an understanding of why they are in Saturday School, you may use the Restorative Action Plan format to help individuals repair harms and prevent repeating behaviors that caused them to be there. (See Restorative Action Plan handout and form)

Rounds in circle

Round 1

“Next I would like to talk about why we’re here today. Why are you in Saturday School today? I’m here because...”

Round 2

“Who is affected by you being here today?”

Round 3

“What needs to happen to fix things and ensure you don’t come back to Saturday School?”

Closing round

“How did today’s circle feel? Any observations? Was this process helpful? Are there any additional support you need to be successful and ensure you don’t come back to Saturday School?”