

Success Stories

1. Tim Crawford- Morrill Elementary School

We held a regularly scheduled circle last week with some 4th – 5th grade girls who have been struggling with some strained relationships and as a result have been getting into altercations in the classroom and during recess/lunch. Last week was the third circle we help with them, all focused on building relationships. After the first circle there were some feelings that these relationships had no chance of being repaired, while others were optimistic and willing to work to build those relationships. The second circle the young lady who felt there was no hope choose to sit out, so our circle shifted to what everyone thought about the feelings the young lady was experiencing that lead her to choose not to participate, ways we as a community can do nice things for this young lady, and if going out of their way to do something for this young lady even if she does something mean to them would have a positive impact on their relationship and how we can go about carrying that out. The young ladies left the circle excited to do nice things for their classmate. The third circle the young lady decided to rejoin the circle. At first the young lady did not want to talk in the circle so we went around the circle each how the strained relationship makes them feel, saying positive things about the young lady and their hopes to build a healthy relationship with the young lady. We could see that the young lady's attitude was starting to shift and she wanted to say something back to the group but wasn't quite ready. However she was ready to step away from the circle for a minute and talk with a peace keeper about her feelings, and in the meantime the rest of made signs and cards saying "We love you _____!!!" and other heartwarming messages. When the young lady returned to see what her classmates had done for her and feeling loved by her classmates, a huge smile spread across her face and they were all giving hugs to each other.

2. Tilden/Umoja

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyAaT-8mwFs>

Anonymous

4. After a physical conflict in the classroom took place between two students, the class came together to process what they had witnessed. Values and norms were set for the space and a talking piece was introduced. The teacher explained to the class why they were in seated in a circle. During the circle, students discussed how they felt when the physical altercation took place. Students expressed their feelings, which included words like scared, worried, and sad. Students then spoke about how they were feeling about the situation now, a few days later. Some students expressed disappointment in their classmates who were not behaving appropriately at the time of the altercation. Other

students expressed feelings of being worried and concerned about the classmates who had conflict. Some felt curious as to how class would function when the students returned. All of their feelings and thoughts were validated by the teacher and facilitator. Through the circle process, the students then came up with a list of strategies they would use to deal with conflict that comes in the classroom. After the list was created, the students narrowed the list down to the top three strategies they think would be most useful in times of conflict. The students agreed to share this list with their classmates and to have this list hanging up on poster paper in their classroom. The circle ended with a check in to see how everyone was feeling.

The teacher found the circle very useful. She felt it was a good space for students to openly reflect on the situation they had witnessed and figure out jointly how the class should best handle conflict in the future. The students felt much better after leaving the circle. The teacher continues to incorporate restorative practices into her classroom.

Anonymous

5. I did a "re-entry circle" with two girls who been in a fight. Two days prior, one girl got into a physical altercation with another girl. They had been suspended and were returning to school when I got involved. Renee (names changed) was the aggressor in the fight. She felt like she was repeatedly insulted by someone who used to be her friend. The reality may have been more that the class was making fun of her shoes, and she picked the smallest person. Sharice (name changed) was surprised that Renee attacked her, but didn't want to back down from any future fights. I met with both girls individually, and it became clear that there was a lot under the surface. The girls had been good friends several years ago when Renee had moved in with a family member who was close with Sharice. At some point in time the friendship mutually fell apart, but feelings of betrayal and disappointed expectations remained. While these unresolved feelings festered, both of the girls continued on to different types of high school experiences. These paths diverged and eventually reconnected explosively, in the form of a fight that seemed to surprise everyone in the room. In pre-conferencing individually, it became clear that these two former friends felt totally misunderstood, but confident that they could listen and be heard. We practiced things like reflective listening, and "I Statements." It didn't take long until Renee and Sharice were sitting across from each other, validating each others different experiences, communicating constructively about what lead to the fight, and ultimately finding resolution from some of the hurt feelings that stemmed from years prior. The beauty of this experience for me isn't that they became best friends, or lived happily ever after. Renee and Sharice don't necessarily even like each other that much. What made this situation a success story is that despite different perspectives, communication styles, and expectations, these girls were able to come to a place where they could communicate about tension before it built to a fight. I have watched them not only do this successfully, but feel a sense of pride in themselves for being able to resolve conflict with their words. This is some impressive growth for two girls that only days before were looking to physically assault each other.

Anonymous

6. "Two young women got into an argument over a comment one friend had made about a dress the other friend was planning to wear to a school event. The argument escalated to the point where one friend swung to hit the other. Although the two did not engage in a long physical fight, they both were very emotionally hurt and felt their friendship was over. Through coming together in a peace circle the two young women were able to acknowledge how they both had contributed to escalating the situation. Together they shared their hopes for their friendships and discussed strategies for avoiding future fights. As a result of working through their problem in the peace room both young women were able to avoid an out of school suspension and were able to repair their relationship. Since the peace circle both students have remained friends and sought out support from the peace room for other conflicts and personal issues"