



# CIRCLE TALK

Building Authentic Staff Relationships

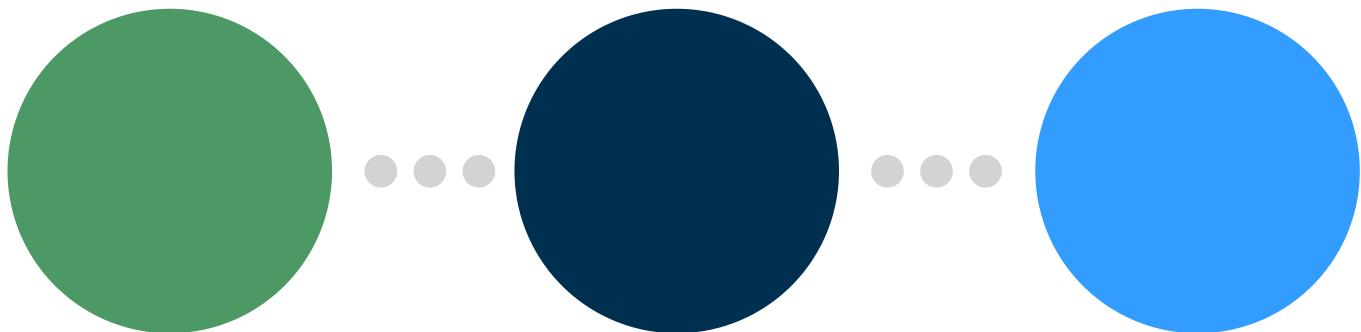
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The full version of *Circle Talk* covers the following additional sections: Getting To Know You, Understanding Your Strength as an Educator, Overcoming Challenges, Acknowledging Difficult Job of Educating Youth, Coworker Engagement, Working with Challenging Students, Inspiration, Self-Care, Building Relationships, and more.

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# CIRCLE TALK

## BUILDING AUTHENTIC STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Healing, growing, and strengthening relationships among staff

### INTRODUCTION

Circle Talk is a common-sense, community-based approach to building relationships and promoting a stronger sense of community between staff by strengthening relationships, ensuring meaningful accountability, and building a sense of trust.

This guide offers school a framework to begin staff circles. The prompts are intended to provide staff in your school or organization with an opportunity to learn more about each other while establishing meaningful and positive connections that will help build trust, foster a sense of belonging, and show appreciation.

# OVERVIEW FOR STAFF CIRCLES

This overview is a suggestion for how to use the included prompts with staff. It is encouraged to find new and creative ways to actively engage your staff with the prompts.



## Welcoming/ Opening

Invite participants to join the circle. You may introduce a relevant quote, poem, or mindful moment to set tone.



## Purpose of Circle

Clearly state and define the purpose of the circle. Review limits of confidentiality and group expectations.



## Norm & Value Setting

Each participant in the circle should identify a value that is important to them.



## Opening Round

Circle keeper reads the first prompt. Then, each participant in the circle will have a chance to reflect and respond to the prompt.



## Middle Round

Circle keeper reads the second prompt. Then, each participant in the circle will have a chance to reflect and respond to the prompt.



## Closing Round

Circle keeper reads the third prompt. Then, each participant in the circle will have a chance to reflect and respond to the prompt.



## Mindful Moment of Reflection

The circle keeper should end with a moment of reflection or share an applicable quote or poem.

# STAFF CIRCLES



Coming together is a beginning.  
Keeping together is progress.  
Working together is success.

~Henry Ford

# WEEK I

## BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PT. I

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- ✓ Talking Piece
- ✓ Index Cards for Norms/ Values
- ✓ Center Piece
- ✓ Flip Chart Paper
- ✓ Markers

### WELCOMING & OPENING

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- The purpose of the welcome and opening ceremony is to begin creating a space where participants are greeted, feel appreciated, and embraced.
- Clearly state and define the purpose of the circle (i.e., the purpose of this circle is to begin to build a sense of community among staff members).
- Review limits of confidentiality (i.e., what is said in group, stays in group).
- You may introduce a relevant poem, quote, or mindfulness activity during this opening

### TALKING PIECE

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- A talking piece can be any item or object used during a circle.
- The purpose of this object or item is to create and promote equity of voice.
- Traditionally, whoever is holding the talking piece, is the one who is talking while others are listening.
- During each round, the talking piece is passed from participant to participant.
- Participants who do not wish to speak or answer a prompt/question may pass.

### GROUP NORMS & VALUES

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- Norms and values are commitments or promises that participants of the circle make to each other about how they will behave in the circle.
- Participants in the circle should identify and write down a value or norm on an index card, which is important to them (see prompt for opening round for more details).
- Some commonly used norms and values are; **Respect the Talking Piece, Talk from the Heart, Maintain Confidentiality, Listen, and No Judgment.**

# WEEK I

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PT. I

## PROMPT FOR OPENING ROUND

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- ✓ Introduce yourself to the group and share the following:
  - How long you have been an educator.
  - One thing you appreciate about your school community.
  - The norm or value you wrote on the index card.
  - After participant shares what they wrote on index card, have them place the index card in the center of the circle and then pass the talking piece.

## PROMPT FOR MIDDLE ROUND

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- ✓ Tell us why you chose to become an educator.

## PROMPT FOR CLOSING ROUND

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- ✓ Tell us at least one goal you have for the school year. Feel free to share if you have more than one goal.
- ✓ Close with a relevant poem, quote, story, or mindful moment.
- ✓ Thank participants for joining in on the circle

# WEEK 2

## BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PART II

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- Talking Piece
- Center Piece

### WELCOMING & OPENING

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- Clearly state and define the purpose of the circle (i.e., the purpose of this circle is to begin to build a sense of community among staff members).
- Review limits of confidentiality (i.e., what is said in group, stays in group).
- Read quote, poem, or begin with a mindful moment.

### TALKING PIECE

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- This should be a quick overview. Shorten as necessary.
- A talking piece can be any item or object used during a circle.
- The purpose of this object or item is to create and promote equity of voice.
- Traditionally, whoever is holding the talking piece, is the one who is talking while others are listening.
- During each round, the talking piece is passed from participant to participant.
- Participants who do not wish to speak or answer a prompt/question may pass.

### GROUP NORMS & VALUES

---

- Norms and values are commitments or promises that participants of the circle make to each other about how they will behave in the circle.
- Review norms and values the group came up with last session.

# WEEK 2

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PART II

## PROMPT FOR OPENING ROUND

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- ✓ Describe how you are currently feeling: Today, I am feeling ...



Clear and sunny (happy and carefree)



Cloudy with a chance of rain (not too bad)



Rain showers (blah...)



Severe Thunderstorms (Not feeling it, at all!)

## PROMPT FOR MIDDLE ROUND

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- ✓ Why is a sense of community important within this school?

- ✓ In your opinion, what is the most challenging thing about building a sense of community among staff?

## PROMPT FOR CLOSING ROUND

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- ✓ What is one thing you can do to improve or enhance the sense of community within your school?

- ✓ Find and share a quote, poem, or thought applicable to building a sense of community.

- ✓ Thank participants for joining in on the circle.

# WEEK 3

## BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PT. III

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- Talking Piece
- Center Piece

### WELCOMING & OPENING

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- Clearly state and define the purpose of the circle (i.e., the purpose of this circle is to begin to build a sense of community Among staff members).
- Review limits of confidentiality (i.e., what is said in group, stays in group).
- Read quote, poem, or begin with a mindful moment.

### TALKING PIECE

---

- This should be a quick overview. Shorten as necessary.
- A talking piece can be any item or object used during a circle.
- The purpose of this object or item is to create and promote equity of voice.
- Traditionally, whoever is holding the talking piece, is the one who is talking while others are listening.
- During each round, the talking piece is passed from participant to participant.
- Participants who do not wish to speak or answer a prompt/question may pass.

### GROUP NORMS & VALUES

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- Norms and values are commitments or promises that participants of the circle make to each other about how they will behave in the circle.
- Review norms and values the group came up with last session.

# WEEK 3

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STAFF PT. III

## PROMPT FOR OPENING ROUND

---

- Describe how you are currently feeling: Today, I am feeling ...



Clear and sunny (happy and carefree)



Cloudy with a chance of rain (not too bad)



Rain showers (blah...)



Severe Thunderstorms (Not feeling it, at all!)

## PROMPT FOR MIDDLE ROUND

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- What is a personal mantra you can use and stick to for this school year (i.e., I will protect my energy.)?
- Identify and name an accountability partner who will help you stick to this mantra.

## PROMPT FOR CLOSING ROUND

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- Find and share a quote, poem, or thought applicable to building a sense of community.
- Thank participants for joining in on the circle.

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