



SAFE CIRCLES

Safe Spaces For Restorative Conversations



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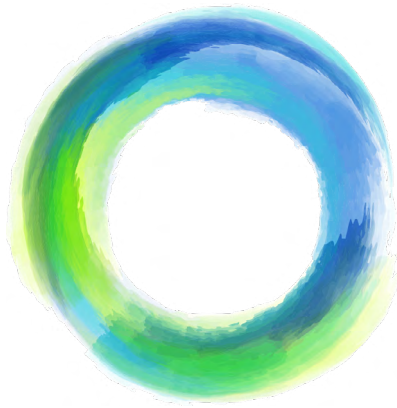


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The full version of Safe Circles covers the following additional sections with prompts: Culture & Identity, Growth Mindset, Strength & Knowledge of Self, Building Empathy, Effectively Managing Stress, Self-Motivation, and more.

For more information, please connect with a 7 Mindsets SEL expert by [clicking here](#), or call 678-878-3144.



SAFE CIRCLES

SAFE SPACES FOR RESTORATIVE CONVERSATIONS

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Restorative practices are a common-sense, community-based approach to building relationships and developing social-emotional competencies. These practices can promote a stronger sense of community between staff by repairing instances of harm, strengthening relationships, ensuring meaningful accountability, and building a sense of trust. Evidence has shown that restorative practices consistently leads to decreased recidivism and higher rates of participant satisfaction. They are structured to address the needs of affected individuals, schools, and communities in ways that complement or substitute for existing punitive systems.

The prompts within this guide are intended to provide schools with 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.

*Disclaimer - *Some of the prompts may evoke strong emotions. Participation in the circle process is completely voluntarily.*



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T H E S A F E A P P R O A C H

What Are SAFE Circles?

SAFE Circles offer youth a safe space to proactively build community, check-in, and actively participate in a healing centered practice. The SAFE Circle is a guiding circle that empowers young people to take an active and thoughtful role in creating their community. SAFE Circles provide youth with a safe space to connect with one another, build trust, show mutual respect, engage in dialogue, and foster a sense of belonging.

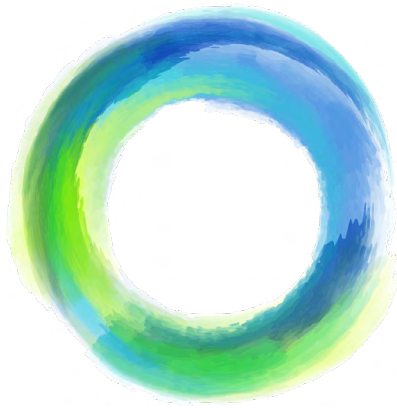
The SAFE Approach

Effective SEL approaches often incorporate four elements that are SAFE; Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit. A meta-analysis of 213 social-emotional school programs showed that the most effective SEL programs incorporate these four SAFE elements.

The SAFE approach includes the following four elements:

1. Sequenced activities that lead in a coordinated and connected way to skill development;
2. Active forms of learning that enable young people to practice and master new skills;
3. Focused time spent developing one or more social and emotional skills;
4. Explicitly define and target specific skills.

By integrating the SAFE approach into the restorative process, you can model it in a way that creates a “safe” space for participants. This approach supports children by helping them recognize how they feel or how someone else might be feeling. Importantly, this approach is an exceptional way to promote authentic dialogue, equity of voice, and the social-emotional development of youth.



SAFE CIRCLES

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SEVEN KEY ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING CIRCLE PROCESSES

SAFE Circles can be used proactively to build community, establish norms, check-in, and collectively solve problems and make decisions. Ideally, the SAFE Circle prompts should be used within the classroom setting, small groups, or across tiered levels of support.

The prompts are also a vehicle for social-emotional learning and content instruction, offering youth an opportunity to take an active role in creating a safer and supportive space in their own classroom. In any context, the circle gives equal opportunity for all to listen, contribute, and practice key life skills.

Here are the seven key assumptions underlying circle processes:

- The core self in everyone is human, wise, and powerful.
- Everything we need to make a positive change is already here.
- The world is profoundly interconnected.
- All humans have gifts and everyone is needed for the gifts they bring.
- Behind our defenses, all human beings desire to be in good relationships with others.
- Human beings are holistic.
- We need practices to build habits of living from the core self.

OVERVIEW FOR SAFE CIRCLES

This overview is a suggestion for how to use the prompts as part of a restorative process. It is encouraged to find new and creative ways to actively engage your students. We recommend SAFE Circles on a weekly basis to build relationships, set consistent norms, check in with each other, share and learn from each other's life experiences, and collectively make decisions and solve problems.



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 in with a moment of reflection or share an applicable quote or poem.



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



OPENING PROMPTS

Awareness is the first
step in healing.

~ Dean Ornish



OPENING PROMPTS

QUICK PROMPTS TO GET STARTED

Wondering where to begin? Here are 10 quick restorative prompts to help get your circle process started. Simply have circle participants share...

- A time when you had to let go of control.
- A time when you were outside your comfort zone.
- A life experience when you “made lemonade out of lemons.”
- An experience of transformation when, out of a crisis or difficulty, you discovered a gift in your life.
- A time when you had to hear something very difficult from someone, and afterward you were grateful that it happened.
- An experience of letting go of anger or resentment.
- An experience of causing harm to someone and then dealing with it in a way you felt good about.
- A time when you acted on your core values even though others did not.
- An embarrassing moment that you can laugh at now.
- An experience of feeling that you did not fit in.

REFLECTIVE QUOTES

QUOTES TO OPEN OR CLOSE YOUR CIRCLE

Here are quotes you can use for reflection during opening or closing rounds.

“Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature’s law is wrong it learned to walk with out having feet. Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.
~Tupac Shakur”

“Nobody normal ever accomplished anything meaningful in this world.”

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.
~Milton Berle”

“Try to be like the turtle
- at ease in your own shell.
~Bill Copeland”

“Change your thoughts and
you change your world.
~Norman”



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



ENERGIZING PROMPTS

Give light and people
will find the way.

~Ella Baker



ENERGIZING PROMPTS

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Looking to bring a little fun and excitement? These Prompts are sure to spark discussion and to Energize participants.

- Name one person who has made a difference in your life.
- What's your favorite thing about yourself?
- Your last french fry fell on the floor ...Do you eat it or leave it?
- If you had to pick one season (winter, spring, summer, or fall) to live in forever, which season would you choose and why?
- You won \$1 million dollars but you have to spend it all in 24 hours. How do you spend it?
- What's your favorite cereal and why?
- What's your favorite social media platform and why?
- What's something you are proud of?
- Share about a time when someone was happy for you
- Imagine you just won a free vacation. Who would you take with you and why?
- What's an item that is important to you?
- If you had your own TV show, what would your theme song be?
- What would your rap name be and why?



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



SENSE OF BELONGING & COMMUNITY



Communication leads to
community, that is, to
understanding, intimacy,
and mutual valuing.

~Rollio May

PROMPT I

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY PT. I

MATERIALS NEEDED

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

WELCOMING & OPENING

- The purpose of the welcome and opening ceremony is to begin creating a safe 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 amongst the circle participants).
- Review limits of confidentiality (i.e., what is said in group, stays in the group).
- You may introduce relevant poem, quote, or mindfulness activity during this opening.

TALKING PIECE

- A talking piece can be any item or object used during a restorative 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.
- 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.**

PROMPT I

BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY PT. I

PROMPT FOR OPENING ROUND

- ✓ Introduce yourself to the group and share the following:
 - Your preferred name and pronouns
 - One thing you appreciate about your school community
 - The norm or value you wrote on the index card
 - After participants share what they wrote (or thought of in their head), have them place the index card in the center of the circle and then pass the talking piece. (Modify if virtual)

PROMPT FOR MIDDLE ROUND

- ✓ What's your favorite song and why?
- ✓ What's your favorite fast food restaurant?

PROMPT FOR CLOSING ROUND

- ✓ What is one thing that has recently made you laugh?
- ✓ Choose one word that best describes your mood.