

THE CIRCLE GUIDE

**HOW FAMILIES CAN ADDRESS
CONFLICT IN HEALTHIER WAYS.**

the katallasso group

INSTRUCTIONS

The Circle process guides entire groups of people to live life to the fullest and accomplish their big dreams. Circles can invite transformation in any person participating (adults and children) to unite their beliefs, values, and behaviors. The Circle is exactly what every family should practice as they weave in their heritage, faith, and origin to strengthen relationships. Circles can guide people in conversation to "work out" beliefs, patterns, and behaviors that are working against them.

Normal yet powerful results include: family members feel valued, worthy, and positioned for greatness as they see their own story adding value to others' lives, and most importantly, they learn that their life matters. Circles can lead your family to new learnings, sparking new dreams. It can liberate individuals as they become more self-aware, tangibly experience belonging, grow through others' stories, and even heal from wounds. Children and adults equally benefit as they slow down to listen and are heard without interruption. Circles are a way of life as families put their values into practice.

Circles are a communication technique couched in shared values between people coming together. There is also the use of a talking piece. Talking pieces bring equal voices to participants and also distribute power to all.

Never heard of Circles? They've been around since ancient societies began and are known for establishing social order across the globe. Your cultural background likely had Circles as a regular practice that has since gone missing in our modern homes for the most part. Circles have been used in schools, prisons, and even workplaces. We contend that the family is the most important social unit to understand and experience Circle - as families can work on uniting beliefs, values, and behavior - they take it to their "circles of influence" to do the same.

In these instructions, we'll be sure to show you how to prepare and facilitate a Circle. We know you've got something in mind. If we look at the reality you wish to make possible or a dream to fulfill, let's think of it as a bull's eye for the sake of these instructions. We'll lead you and those you gather together through a step-by-step process to hit your bull's eye. It may not happen in one Circle or even in a month. But Circles have been used for centuries to pull people together to work towards a better reality effectively; they work. It is possible to achieve your dreams and wishes for your family using this process.

The Circle process has three main steps that make up the Circle while using a Talking Piece:

- Building Common Ground,
- Facilitation of Storytelling and Questions, and
- Consensus/Unity (when decisions are being made).

If you keep these three steps in mind for each Circle, you are well on your way!

PREPARING FOR A FAMILY CIRCLE

SET UP:

Each family or household will set up their Circle in a circle formation. You can choose a comfortable space where the family typically gathers to watch TV or play board games. Circles are best facilitated when a low coffee table or even an open space in the middle, as chairs form a physical circle. A kitchen table is less effective but can work if that's your best option.

FOOD:

Food always improves conversation and company! When planning your Circle, what food will bring everyone together? If you are talking about topics that matter to the kids - order pizza and their favorite soda. Chocolate chip cookies, dessert, etc. - be creative. The timing of eating is your call completely. Before, during, or after Circle.

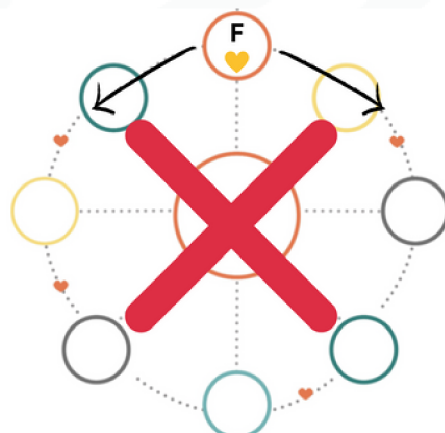
SELECT A TALKING PIECE:

A talking piece is the hallmark element of a Circle. A talking piece is any predetermined, non-threatening object used for talking and speaking during Circle. As you get started, it's good to help the group understand that only the person with the talking piece can speak (and be heard) while everyone else enjoys the benefits of focused listening. By following this simple rule, you will all see how different and powerful your conversations can become.

The talking piece gives everyone an equal voice, and power is distributed among all as it is passed. Many love the opportunity to have the talking piece and not be interrupted if you include children or teens. The talking piece goes around the Circle, person by person, in a clockwise or counterclockwise rotation. It never gets passed across the middle but instead around the Circle circularly. Sometimes, you may wish to "suspend" the talking piece if you arrive at a point in your conversation that needs a free-flow dialogue. Simply pick it back up when ready and reengage the group with your next round of questions or whoever was next.

REMEMBER: If you are not holding the talking piece, you are experiencing the opportunity to listen deeply. You or others in the Circle may wish to give your input immediately. However, your moment to respond will come when the talking piece comes all the way around back to you. You can also pass (i.e. give the talking piece to the next person) if you have nothing to say or share.

The Circle facilitator (likely you) starts the Circle process with the talking piece and typically offers a question sending the talking piece around the Circle for collective wisdom or sharing.



TIP: The Talking Piece

Sets apart from all other communication forms.

Can go clockwise or counterclockwise.

Never across the middle.

GREATEST RULE: respect the talking piece and do not interrupt.

It can be suspended.



RESTORATIVE BELIEFS

We recommend sharing these beliefs at the beginning of every family circle.
Print and make available during the actual circle time.

RESTORATIVE BELIEFS

the katalasso group®

We all have inherent value, dignity,
& worth. We each deserve respect.

We all have a unique purpose to fulfill
in our lives.

Our talents, gifts, & experiences are needed.

We have what we need to get started.

We desire peace with ourselves & others.

We are invited to come as we are - holistically.

Our behaviors impact one another.

*Credit for Restorative Beliefs:
Paraphrased from Circle Forward by
Kay Pranis (Living Justice Press, St.
Paul, MN 2021)

4 KEY RELATIONSHIPS

We're all working to bring balance to four key relationships of life. When a relationship is out of balance, we experience conflict. You can use this diagram to help with your family circle. Oftentimes, these relationships can find balance during the circle process.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS OF LIFE

Thomas Chalmers

the katallasso group©

HOW YOU MAKE MEANING OUT OF YOUR LIFE:

SPIRITUALITY
GOD
I DON'T
MONEY
FAITH IN _____
OTHER

WHAT TALENTS AND ABILITIES ARE BEING MAXIMIZED?

DO YOU FEEL PROUD OF YOUR
CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD?



HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF?

SELF-WORTH
PERSONAL VALUE
CARE FOR YOUR
BODY, MIND,
EMOTIONS

HOW ARE RELATIONSHIPS WITH:

FAMILY
FRIENDS
MARRIAGE
YOUR PEOPLE

*Credit for 4 Key Relationships -
Thomas Chalmers, The Chalmers
Center, & When Helping Hurts (Brian
Fikkert & Steve Corbett)

The Recipe of Circle

Like a cake recipe, you are encouraged to follow the basic steps and customize them to meet your family's needs. Be sure to prepare an excellent agenda for the needs of your family. Use these steps to help you be creative.

1

BUILDING COMMON GROUND

Prep: Gather people in a circle with food and a talking piece.

Then facilitate questions using the talking piece and going around the circle.

- Offer an "opener" or check-in such as:
 - How are you? or If you were the weather, what's your weather report today?
- Common Ground: Read the Restorative Beliefs list and ask everyone which one stands out and why.
- Commitment: Facilitate a round and ask the group to commit to the beliefs.

2

FACILITATED ROUNDS OF QUESTIONS & STORYTELLING

Could you create a short list of questions based on the topic that invite people to speak as the talking piece comes to them? Questions are open-ended and can invite story-telling or seeking to understand. Circle Facilitator always prepares their own answers and goes first to set the tone. (TIP: Use the Appendix to select 3-5 questions or craft your own here.)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3

CONSENSUS BUILDING OR PLANNING ROUND (IF NECESSARY)

When working through topics that require agreement from members. Not necessary for every circle.

You only need to ask the question: what do we need to commit to or decide on? Move through rounds until you've reached an agreement. Determine if you all wish to write it down or how you will remind one another of your agreement.

Final Check-Out Round: Invite a round to see "how we are doing" or if anyone has a final remark. It's good to move people to a place of hopefulness and acknowledge the work done together.

HELPFUL GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER FOR A FAMILY CIRCLE:

No technology during Circle - be fully present

Take care of yourself (use the restroom, grab water, etc.).

Assume the best in me.

What's said in Circle stays; what's learned leaves.

Maintain confidentiality.

Pay attention to your body language.

Honor the talking piece - only speak when it's in your hand.

Easy Starter Circle - Hi/Lo

This is a classic starter circle to help your family get comfortable. Tweak or add whatever makes sense for your family.

1

BUILDING COMMON GROUND

PREP: Order pizza or make a favorite family meal - eat in the family room or do picnic style in a circle.

Select your talking piece and ask everyone to share or bring an item (to show) that made them especially proud this last week to Circle.

Read the Restorative Beliefs list - what stands out today and why?

2

FACILITATED ROUNDS OF QUESTIONS & STORYTELLING

- 1) Share a story from this past week that inspired you.
- 2) Share a difficult story to deal with this past week - how did you handle it?
- 3) What can we do for you as we look at this next week?
- 4) What are you most looking forward to this upcoming week?

3

CONSENSUS BUILDING OR PLANNING ROUND (IF NECESSARY)

How can you help another family member this coming week based on what you heard in our circle?

HELPFUL GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER FOR A FAMILY CIRCLE:

- No technology during Circle - be fully present
- Take care of yourself (use the restroom, grab water, etc.).
- Assume the best in me.
- What's said in Circle stays; what's learned leaves.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Pay attention to your body language.
- Honor the talking piece - only speak when it's in your hand.

APPENDIX: OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

TO CALM NERVES OR BE LIGHTHEARTED

Share a funny memory or story that always makes you laugh when you tell it.

If your pet were here, what three things would he/she say about you?

What is your "go-to" voice to get people to smile or laugh?

If you could go on vacation anywhere and money wasn't an issue - where would you go and why?

What do you say to your pets on a regular basis (or did you when you had a pet) and why?

TO GET TO KNOW PEOPLE

Share about one of your hobbies and the story behind it.

What is your favorite way to enjoy the weekend?

Tell us about your favorite music and why you love it so much.

What have been some of the most impactful books or authors in your life and why?

How do you define the season of life you are in and what you find great about it.

In what ways are you like an introvert or an extrovert?

Share a few items on your bucket list.

What family tradition would you like to create and why would that be meaningful to you?

When stress shows up in your life - where does it lodge itself in your body?

What did the last carefree and restful day look like to you?

How do you know where you are at your best?

Share 3 attributes about yourself that you love.

Who do you aspire to become?

BUILDING COMMON GROUND

Share about one of your most difficult teenage stories (excellent for parent/teen conflict).

Share how you made an important decision that would impact the rest of your life.

Share a time that you felt you belonged and loved - what did it feel like to you?

Share your desires for the future and why that means so much to you right now?

What has been a defining moment for you? Share if you knew it before or after it took place.

What qualities are you needing from the group and are also willing to commit to?

Respect, Relationship, and Responsibility are important for us - which one stands out the most and why?

HEALING OR GRIEF/TRAUMA

Share how your energy has been these days.

How have you been feeling about your day to day living?

What areas of life are you feeling the most pressure recently?

Can you share a clear vision of what you want or where you want to go with life?

Who are you feeling close or connected to?

How have you been taking care of yourself - physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc?

How are you sleeping?

What happens that makes the problem better?

What challenges are you bumping into?

How have your personal boundaries been working for you lately?

CONFLICT (*FROM THE CONFLICT EXPERT TIPS)

What will this conflict do to our relationship?

How can we repair the damage that this conflict has caused to our relationship?

How do you see a future between us/ our businesses etc?

What would you be willing to let go of in order to move on?

What will happen if we allow this conflict to continue?

How will this benefit / disadvantage you?

What will be lost/ gained by allowing this conflict to continue?

What good is this conflict doing to you or your children?

Who will you/we be without it?

What will happen / won't happen if I /we let it go?

What emotions are you experiencing about the conflict?

What do you need to forgive?

What power does this conflict have over us or you?

What will your/our day look like without it?

How is this conflict affecting your physical and mental well-being?

Why is this conflict important to you?

What would you be willing to do to resolve this?

What would a potential resolution look like?

What would you be willing to accept in light of this conflict?

What won't you accept when it comes this conflict?

What does this conflict reveal about us or our values?

What are your intentions?

What is your perception?

Would distance help us move forward?

Which of my needs are being neglected and which are being satisfied by this conflict?

What do you feel you've personally have gained or lost by this conflict?

How will a resolution serve our children or family's interests?

How will we know when we can trust each other?

What do I need to do to show that you can trust me?

How will trust help us resolve this?

What does trust mean to you?

How do you know when you can't trust somebody?

How can we build trust between us?



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