

Peer Circle Processes

from ICmatch.org

These are group discussion techniques that don't need lengthy training in technique. Group members can take turns in a facilitator role without much risk of harm, given well-intentioned members not currently immersed in trauma. Those don't need to be excluded, but they should have trained therapeutic support.

Name of Process	Basic steps	URL or origin	Main purposes
More business-focused on 1st page, more trust-building personal-feelings focused on 2nd page.			
Mastermind group (peer coaching)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 to 5 people meeting weekly • Your life practice (habit forming) • What UR quitting, what doing/creating • 10 minutes to tell, 5 minutes to respond 	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDWuHsyznf4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical problem • Accountability • Individual issue
Action Circles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspirational quote or statistic as an opening statement • Check ins • Report on actions • Discuss joint project (relevant news) • Pledge new actions • Update about upcoming event or task • Check out (can be gratitude) 	https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/btcearthalliance/pages/273/attachments/original/1439494396/2012_Action_Circle_Handbook.pdf?1439494396	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical problem • Accountability • Individual issue
Way of Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings check-in round • Issues that one is dealing with that may affect performance • Popcorn style (not round) mentions of what stood out • Facilitator suggests theme • Round about theme, but can vary from it • Feelings/impact check-out 	http://emotionalanarchism.com/how-to-form-a-radical-feelz-circle/ (see Council section) https://waysofcouncil.net/online-council-circle-dates/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building • Therapeutic • Individual issue • Group issue
Indigenous councils (Native American /1st Nations, & African)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence or a mindful presence between turns to ensure the speaker has finished and all can process the ideas • Speak when moved by spirit or intuition • Each speaker takes 1 turn only • No set order; use talking stick for turn • No time limit 	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d9RvLcremejPWHfLExOr4O7yEtT51R4x_xYYRmvq2rc/edit?pli=1#heading=h.sar74skjc9wy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical problem
Feelz circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening meditation or poem • each person speaks to 3 P's: personal, political (what you're reading or thinking about or climate you're working in) and professional • Ask for feedback if you want to • Meta-round if agreed on 	http://emotionalanarchism.com/how-to-form-a-radical-feelz-circle/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building • Therapeutic • Individual issue
Restorative Circles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible formats. Facilitator usually asks questions initially and each person answers one at a time, then discussion 	https://thewriteofyourseoulife.org/what-are-restorative-circles/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building • Trauma mitigation • Restorative justice

The following group types need a high level of trust in the goodwill &/or maturity level of others.			
Case clinic peer-coaching (from Theory U)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case-giver says their real challenge intention statement • What do I need to learn or let go of? • Clarifying questions; no fixing • Non-judgmental listening • Stillness to contemplate • Share non-verbal responses • Generative dialog & questions • Capture key takeaways 	https://www.presenting.org/resources/tools/case-clinic-desc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical problem • Individual issue
U-process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intention statement (challenge situation) • Clarifying questions & answers • Stillness (allow for silent reflection) • Mirroring (share feelings & “gestures”) • Generative dialog (what was in answers) • Closing (state insight) 	https://www.presenting.org/files/tools/PI_Tool_CaseClinic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therapeutic • Practical problem • Individual issue
Clearness Committee (Quakers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeker states problem • Two questioners ask; no advice • Seeker answers aloud or not • Silence is respected; speak only if/when moved to by spirit or intuition • Questioners mirror back a summary • Affirm focus person’s strengths • Note-taker gives seeker notes 	http://emotionalanarchism.com/how-to-form-a-radical-feelz-circle/ (see Clearness Committee section)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs pre-established trust • Therapeutic • Individual issue • Group issue
Feedback sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitator reminds focus on behaviors not blame of person or their traits • Each says what has gone well or was completed (gratitude for the others) • Each says what has been problematic related to group or individuals in it • Each says what they would like more of • Each may ask for advice if there’s time 	https://qualityswdev.com/2017/01/22/how-to-give-and-receive-feedback-in-an-agile-organization/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs pre-established trust • Therapeutic • Practical problem • Accountability • Individual issue • Group issue
Circle of Trust™	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guided conversations; start with a prompt such as a poem, a teaching story • No advising; ask questions • Proprietary; steps not available online; training programs available 	http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/ or http://www.menniescapens.com/the-circle-of-trustreg-approach.html	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building
Empathy & reflective listening circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker states “I feel__ when you __” • Listener summarizes & asks if they understood correctly; can ask speaker to “say more about that” • Refrain from judging, analyzing, advising detaching, diagnosing, or sympathizing 	http://cultureofempathy.com/Community/Handouts/How-To-Empathic-Listening.htm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building • Therapeutic • Accountability • Individual issue • Group issue
Heart Shares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each in turn states a check in feeling • Each says current happenings “behind the scenes” that might affect emotions 	Cooperative Culture Handbook available from FIC p. 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building

Note. For much of this list, content was collected from here: <https://www.microsolidarity.cc/crewing>

We added the steps summary, purposes columns, & a few additional circle formats.

See https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d9RvLcremejPWHfLExOr4O7yEtT51R4x_xYYRmvq2rc/edit

Tips for Facilitators Getting Started

- Envision the group's purpose, invite people, set your schedule and norms, determine when to re-visit and potentially change the purpose or processes of your meetings.
- Be sure to clearly communicate the format so all will feel comfortable and know what they can expect.
- For a large group or people who are unfamiliar with each other, it's important for the facilitator to establish norms about cross-talk and confidentiality in the beginning. If members know each other, simply invite people to state if they don't want their shares discussed during or out of the circle.
- Many formats have similar principles; adapt to the changing needs or preferences of the group.

Process Formats Appropriate for Various Group Types

- **Business meetings:** inform others in advance about (a) the meeting agenda items, (b) why these currently need discussion, (c) hoped-for outcome (understand or accomplish), & (d) how to prepare
- **lower or varied levels of maturity (including teens and children):** all groups on the first page and feedback sessions (the three middle steps could be remembered as "a rose, a thorn, and a rosebud")
- **vulnerable or traumatized populations:** as an addition to psychotherapy led by licensed professionals, way of council, indigenous councils, & circle of trust are less likely invasive or probing
- **online:** the circle format is egalitarian, with everyone seeing each other; try to replicate this online by asking all to use a view format that shows each member at the same time; ask all to use video; not appropriate for sacred formats such as indigenous circles

Terms and Concepts

- **facilitator:** by whatever label, this is the person who sets up the expectations or rules, decides when some kind of intervention is needed for an unexpected event or reaction, helps members feel safe
- **confidentiality:** an element of most circles, which should be stated, that nothing stated will be shared with others if it would otherwise have been unknown; typically this means not bringing up the topic even to the one who shared, and if it is, done so with a respectful request and permission
- **round:** taking turns where each speaks once, sometimes in order of seating, counterclockwise
- **talking stick:** an object passed to or picked up by one who is next to speak, signifying they're not done with their turn; gives the speaker the chance to think in silence without others starting a turn
- **bio-break:** if longer than an hour, invite a 5-minute break to stretch or meet other bodily needs
- **sparkle fingers:** wiggling all fingers about chest-high, as a sign of agreement or enthusiasm
- **shrine or centerpiece:** some groups use a collection in the center composed of an object or two brought by each person that is important or sacred to them; some facilitators bring a centerpiece

Managing Conflict

- If conflict is expected or reasonably likely, you might state in advance whether the facilitator's role is or is not to take care of people's feelings during the group nor to resolve the conflict. Mention that working through conflict can deepen group relationships. Participants can be advised to take a break if absolutely necessary and to resolve the issue outside of circle time. Remind everyone of the purpose of the group process and that this is not a therapeutic group.
- If someone expresses a disagreement or difficulty with something happening in the circle, paraphrase to ensure that you understand what the person has shared. When they agree that they have been understood, you might (a) ask the group if they would like to forfeit an item from the agenda to discuss the disagreement, (b) invite any who can to continue the conversation after the agenda has been completed, (c) suggest the disagreement could be an agenda item for the next circle.
- If you sense tension in the room, try one of the following techniques: Stop for a moment of silent meditation. Ask everyone to make eye contact with each other in the room. Ask "How are you feeling? What are your fears right now? What is exciting about this? Is there another way of seeing the situation?" Go around the circle with a quick check-in on how everyone is feeling.