

# Peer Support Circles Quick Reference



## Guidelines for Effective Circle Meetings

### Before Upcoming Meeting

- Remind members of the date, time and connection information.
- Remind them to bring the Quick Reference and Personal Journal.
- Remind them to do front half of their Personal Journal.
- Suggest that they soon begin sharing the facilitation tasks.

### Agenda for Support Circles

#### Opening the Meeting and Check-in

1. Welcome members (1 minute)
2. Review “Values” and “Ground Rules” to the right (1)
3. Each member completes front half of Personal Journal (2)
4. Each member checks in, very briefly mentioning their priority for this meeting (2)
5. Review optional guidelines “How to Get Supported” and “How to Support Others” (2)

#### During Time Slots

- Be sure each member gets equal time
- Each person gets support from other members
- Encourage optional "Useful Questions to Offer Support"

#### Closing and Evaluating the Meeting

1. Each member completes back half of Personal Journal (2)
2. Invite each member to say what they learned (2)
3. Evaluate the meeting, with each person saying: (5)
  - a. Their rating of the overall quality of the meeting (“1” is very low, “5” is very high)
  - b. Why they chose that rating
  - c. What they could have done in that meeting to help the meeting get a rating of “5” now
- d. Verify the date, time and location of the next meeting (1)

### Facilitation Tasks – Running the Meeting

- Manage the meeting to Agenda for Support Circles, below
- Keep track of time.
- During each member's time slot:
  - Suggest they quickly share results of actions they did.
  - Call on quiet members to support the presenter.
  - Remember you can offer support to the presenter, too.
  - At the midpoint, ask presenter if the time slot is helpful.
  - Tell the presenter when they have 2 minutes left.
  - Be sure presenter's actions are realistic and relevant.

#### Values

- Participate fully.
- Communicate your needs.
- Help each other clarify needs.
- Respect those needs.
- Help members exchange support, feedback, questions and resources.

#### Ground Rules

- Start and end on time.
- Confidentiality is assured.
- Keep the process focused.
- Manage your time; help the others to help you.
- All opinions are honored.
- You can respectfully disagree with each other.
- Let other members know if you cannot attend the next meeting.

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## Optional Guidelines for Support

### How to Get Supported

- Use your time as you prefer.
- Briefly explain your current priority.
- Leave time for others to support you.
- Describe your feelings, if you prefer.
- Explain your priority in terms of here-and-now.
- Avoid long, extensive details about the past.
- Be brief in your descriptions and answers.
- Try not to frequently repeat yourself.
- If the support is not helpful to you, say so.
- Say what kind of support would be most useful

### How to Support Others

- Listen closely to the presenter.
- Be accepting, compassionate and respectful.
- Summarize, paraphrase and affirm.
- Be brief in your questions and offerings.
- Ask questions about the presenter's current perspectives, assumptions, conclusions, etc.
- Limit advice and general discussion.
- Avoid lecturing the presenter.
- Help the presenter come to learning and *realistic* actions to take before the next meeting.

## Useful Questions to Offer Support

- Focus on the presenter's thoughts, feelings, and actions, not their boss's, spouse's, etc.
- Rarely have "yes" or "no" answers.
- Rarely start with "why".
- Rarely focus much on the past. Instead, focus on the present and future.
- Avoid "you should", "you have to", "you must", etc.

**Curious**  
**Be: Caring**  
**Concise**

## Sample Questions for Phases of a Time Slot

### 1. Help People Report Their Priority:

- How are you feeling today?
- What do you want to work on today?
- What would you like from us today?
- How would you like to get it?
- Have you said everything that you want to say?
- What is the bottom line?
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Help People Clarify Their Priority:

- How is this priority so important to you now?
- How do you feel about all of this?
- Which feeling is the strongest?
- How might others see the situation?
- What do you think is the root cause of all this?
- Might you be part of the cause somehow? How?
- What does your gut tell you about your situation?
- What advice would a good friend give you?
- What else would you like us to ask you?
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Help People Move to Actions:

- Have you experienced anything like this before? What did you do? How did it work out?
- What do you hope for?
- What's preventing you from...?
- What would you be willing to give up for that?
- If you could change one thing, what would it be?
- Imagine a point in the future where your priority is addressed. How did you get there?
- What can you do before the next meeting?
- What can you do to support yourself?
- How will you do the action(s)? By when? How will we know when done?
- Is there additional support that you need from us?
- \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Help People Deepen Their Learning:

- Any new insights about you? Your situation?
- How do they change things going forward?
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