



Facilitator Talking Points

Step-by-Step Directions to Facilitate Peer Support Circles

How to Use This Document

You could facilitate the Circle process just by following the basic directions in the section "Facilitation Tasks" in the [Quick Reference](#) tool.

However, this document provides detailed "talking points" with even more detailed directions, if desired, for training members and facilitating meetings.

The points assume that each member already has the [Peer Support Circles Quick Reference](#) and a [Peer Support Circle Personal Journal](#), which are available at PeerSupportCircles.org.

Consider These Tips for Meeting Virtually

If your members are meeting virtually / online, then before you facilitate your meetings, review the tips in the following document. They can readily be integrated into the talking points throughout this overall document.

[Tips for Facilitating Virtual Peer Support Circles](#)

Reference These Guidelines for Special Situations

On rare occasions, there are situations that require additional guidelines, for example, if there's a problem with attendance or if a strong disagreement arises between members. In those situations, this document will be useful.

[Advanced Techniques in Facilitating Peer Support Circles \(PSCs\)](#)

NOTE: If you plan to share support with one other person, rather than a Circle of 4-5 members, then guidelines in [Sharing Help Between Two People](#) will be very useful for each of you.

Agenda – Opening (10 minutes)

- **Read Values and Ground Rules out loud.**
 - Read the “Values” and “Ground Rules” next to the Agenda on the *Quick Reference*.
 - At the ground rule “confidentiality,” assert that they never share names of people in their group or what each person is working on.
- **Select priority – complete 1st part of the Personal Journal.**
 - Clarify that there is no “perfect priority” – that it’s up to each member as to what is the best priority for them today.
 - Give them a quiet two minutes as each of them answers questions 1-4 on the *Personal Journal*.
- **Do a quick check-in.**
 - In roundtable fashion, each person takes *at most 10-15 seconds* to name the nature of his/her priority, e.g., “I would like help to better manage my time. I am struggling to juggle home-schooling with home-working. I’d like to know what you all do.” Depending on the nature of the group, you might also invite them to mention how they are feeling or showing up today. NOTE: Don’t let the members start the supporting during the check-in.
 - The total time for check-in is 1-2 minutes at most for all of the members together.
 - If someone hasn’t selected a priority yet, then have him/her get the last time slot during the time slot section of the meeting.
- **Review guidelines for "How to Get Supported" and "How to Support Others".**
 - Read the guidelines in the section “How to Get Supported.” Add that each member is encouraged to follow these guidelines during the first 2-3 minutes of his or her time slot.
 - Read the guidelines in “How to Support Others.”
 - Remind members that successfully supporting a member does not mean solving that member's problem. It means continually attending to that member during his or her time in a meeting.
 - NOTE: You might skip reviewing these guidelines after the second meeting.

Agenda – During Time Slots (20 minutes for each member)

□ Set the stage.

- Mention that now the members will get to experience the supporting in the Circle. Assure them that they don't need special, advanced skills to be helpful to each other.
- Add that you'll be facilitating during the time slots, by doing the activities listed in the "Facilitation Tasks" in the *Quick Reference*, again holding up that tool and pointing to that section as you explain that.
- Explain that "successful facilitation" is doing those activities and ensuring people stick to the guidelines. Success is not solving each person's problem.
- Mention how long the time slots will be and that you'll be watching the clock for them.

□ Start the time slots.

- Ask for a volunteer to be helped first.
 - If no one volunteers, then pick the person whose first name starts with a letter that is closest to the letter "A" (explaining this technique to the Circle). If that person really seems reluctant, then move on to another volunteer.
 - After the first time slot, call on each member in a random, not round table, way.
- During each time slot:
 - Attend to each of the bullets in the subsection, "Facilitation Tasks." This is very important during the time slots!
 - Be sure to ask "Is this helpful?" halfway through each time slot.
 - Remind members about guidelines and sample questions in the *Quick Reference*.
 - If members are supporting each other on the phone without video, then remind each member to say his/her name when he/she poses a question or comment.
 - Ensure each member selects a *realistic* action during the time slot. Keep stressing this!
- Watch the clock! Remind the presenter when they are about halfway through their time slot and when they have about 2 minutes left. Then wind the time slot up on time.
- Especially in the first and second meetings, after each time slot, consider taking 2 minutes to debrief the time slot, e.g., by converting bullets in "Facilitation Tasks" to questions, and also perhaps asking the following:
 - "Did you notice how the supporting is different than a typical conversation?"
 - "Did you notice you don't have to know a lot about the presenter to be helpful?"
 - "Did you feel kind of overwhelmed at first, like it was your responsibility to solve the presenter's problem or achieve his/her goal? Remember that you only have to be there for the presenter – it's up to him/her to accept whatever help is most useful to him/her."
 - "Can you see how this process can be very useful, especially in ongoing meetings?"
 - "Anything else that you'd like to do to enrich the process?"
- When the time slots are done, remind the Circle that what you were doing was attending to each of the bullets in the subsection, "Facilitation Tasks."

Agenda – Closing (10 minutes)

- **Capture actions and learnings – complete 2nd part of the *Personal Journal*.**
 - Give them 2-3 minutes of quiet time for them to complete the second part.
- **Share learnings out loud.**
 - Ask the Circle if anyone wants to share what he/she wrote as an answer to question #8 in the Journal about what he/she learned. NOTE: Don't have members start sharing information about what worked and what didn't in the meeting so far – reserve that information for the next step in the agenda, the step about evaluating the meeting.
- **Evaluate the meeting out loud.**
 - Ask each member to rate the quality of this meeting, starting with the activities in the Opening, on a scale from 1 to 5 where 5 is very high. If members are meeting face-to-face, have each member write the number down on a piece of paper.
 - Remind them that successful support does not mean solving the presenter's "problem."
 - Then in roundtable fashion, have each member:
 1. Say or show his/her rating,
 2. Why he/she chose that rating.
 3. What he/she could have done *in this meeting* to make the rating a 5 now.
- **Confirm the next session's date, time, location and host.**
 - Be sure that all members agree on this information.

NOTE: **Remind members that they are in a confidential relationship in and between their Circle meetings.** They can share questions, answers and other resources at any time, e.g., via email, if they prefer.

Evaluating Your Circle (After Your 3rd and 6th Meetings)

It's useful at the mid-point and end of your Circles series, to take a quick snapshot of how you all are doing in the Circles. What is the quality of the meetings? Facilitation? Each member's results? Here are directions and practical tools for [evaluating your Circle](#).

Ending Your Circle (Your 7th Meeting)

After six meetings, it is useful to have another meeting to stand back and reflect on your overall experiences in your meetings. For example, for each member to think about:

- What have I learned during the meetings? What new knowledge, skills and perceptions have I gleaned?
- What do I appreciate about my fellow members, so far, and what do I want to tell them?
- Do we, as a Circle, want to continue for another six meetings? If so, then we should sign another Member Agreement to formally acknowledge that decision.
- Here are [directions for ending a Circle](#).