

## Sharing or Community Circles

**Purpose:** The purpose of a Sharing Circle or Community Circle is to give everyone a voice and to create a safe place to engender mutual trust, understanding and support.

**Materials:** a talking piece, chime and a timer. *(Some groups do not use a talking piece. We find it helps to hold the circle and gives the speaker a kinesthetic anchor.)*

Sharing circles or community circles bring focused listening and authentic speaking into a circle format so that the whole community is engaged. In this practice, the teacher or facilitator introduces a theme or prompt, and each participant is then invited to share about this theme. It is essential that facilitators are not simply creating the space for this circle, but fully participating. As soon as the theme is set, each person in the circle speaks, one at a time, without interruption. If someone is not ready to speak or does not wish to speak, they can pass to the next person.

After the whole circle has had a first opportunity to speak, those who have not spoken are invited again to speak if they wish, but this is always their choice. Generally, because of time constraints in schools, keeping time is essential. Usually 1 to 2 minutes per person is sufficient, and each person need not take the full time. Facilitators can use a timepiece and a chime or hand signal to note when a participant has 15 seconds remaining, so they can wrap up their sharing.

### **Additional Notes:**

- Facilitators can introduce the idea of a talking piece—and share that it is an object that reminds us who is speaking and who is listening. Each person holds the talking piece while they share and then passes the talking piece to the next person.
- Facilitators can also offer suggestions for how to participate in a community circle such as: To speak spontaneously from our hearts and to get to the heart of what we want to say. To listen with an open mind and an open heart, and not to plan what we are going to say while we are listening to someone else.
- The facilitator can begin and help to set the tone and model appropriate disclosure.

Note: You can read more about this in [\*The Five Dimensions of Engaged Teaching: A Practical Guide for Educators\*](#) by Laura Weaver and Mark Wilding (Solution Tree 2013)