

## **Restorative Circle Basics – Case Study**

There are lots of resources available to learn more about restorative circles. Here is what I did and a few things I learned along the way.

### **Before you have your first circle you will need to get some things together:**

1. A piece of cloth or blanket to put in the middle of the circle as a focal point – think about it like an ocean for the conversation to land in.
2. A basket to put in the center on the cloth.
3. Items that can be used as talking pieces for participants to select from. Only one talking piece is used per circle. Whoever has the talking piece is the only one who can talk. The talking piece is passed around the circle providing everyone an opportunity to speak.
4. Something to make a poster with for agreements or guidelines for the circle.

### **Here are some tips for talking:**

1. Everyone answers succinctly. Practice making thoughtful responses short, sweet and to the point.
2. Participants must possess the talking piece to speak.
3. Speak to the center of the circle to strengthen authenticity of voice.

### **An activity to begin the circle session.**

1. Ring a bell, read a poem etc. For our first circle, I had everyone, including myself, write down one word that described ourselves on our best day on a piece of paper. Then the talking piece was passed around the circle and each person said their word and then added it to the blanket in the middle of the circle. This activity helped provide a common experience to start the circle session.
2. I asked what types of agreements did everyone want while in circle sessions. These are the responses from my students:
  - a. What is said in the circle stays in the circle
  - b. No judgement

- c. Everyone is allowed to feel how they feel
- d. Be trustworthy

3. For the topic of our first circle I used the *activity 5.3 Dealing with Inside and Outside Hurts* from [Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community by Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Prani](#). My first session was with a small group so we were able to do two topics. With larger groups there would probably only be time for one. For the second topic of our first circle I explained that there are different types of hunger that might be experienced more than once in our life. There can be a hunger for food, friendship, love, purpose in life or something else.

- a. Question 1: What kinds of hunger have you experienced?
- b. Question 2: Choose one of the kinds of hunger you have experienced. What helped you overcome to meet the need for that kind of hunger?
- c. Question 3: What could you do to help someone else experiencing this kind of hunger?

*\*During our second session it was especially interesting that I was hungrier for relationships and purpose, while my students answered that they were hungry for knowledge, freedom, peace and happy environment. This makes me think that age has everything to do with perspective and answers in circles.*

- 4. While holding the talking piece - Thank everyone for sharing their thoughts and ideas about hurts and hunger.
- 5. Close the circle by asking if anyone has any final thoughts about the circle experience for the session and pass the talking piece to anyone who wants to share.
- 6. Finally, share gratitude to everyone for their part in the circle.