

# **PRE-CIRCLE**

Pre-Circles begin the Restorative Circle Process. Before we invite everyone together in the same room, the Facilitator talks with the people involved with the conflict.

**Initial Pre-Circle** - the Act/Event is identified, Initiator can be the Author, Receiver or a Community member who witnessed the Act/Event.

**Author Pre-Circle**: to hear from the person who did the act.

**Receiver Pre-Circle**: to hear from the person who received the act, either something that was said or done to them by the author.

**Community Pre-Circle**: to hear from the people effected by the act/event, witnesses to the conflict and its consequences.

The Pre-Circle step allows the facilitator to become multi-partial. All those being called to the Circle **must** meet with the Facilitator in a Pre-Circle.

**Multi-partial** - able to take sides with every person involved in a conflict. The ability to see the humanity in every person involved in the conflict you are facilitating.

## **Clarifying the Act: The Initial Pre-Circle**

Facilitator asks the **Initiator** of the Circle the first question:

**“What was said or done that you would like to bring to a Restorative Circle?”**

The Facilitator proceeds to reflect the meaning of what is said by the Initiator of the circle. As the conversation unfolds, the Facilitator moves on to identify a single act from the many that have been share. The Facilitator reflects to make the act specific.

To **Identify the Act**, the Facilitator asks the **Initiator** one or more of these questions:

**“Which part of what you said captures, represents or sums up the conflict for you?”**

*or*

**“Is there any key moment that stands out for you, that represents this event/ experience for you?”**

*or*

**“Can we access all the meaning this has for you if we use this phrase/act?”**

State the phrase/act to check and confirm with the Initiator that this Act/Event is really the one that points to the conflict.

The Act/Event identified is something that happened **as if a video camera saw it**.

## **What's Next Restorative Circle Process**

"I'd like to share what is involved in the Restorative Circles process in order to clarify with you what's involved. Then I am going to ask you who needs to be present at the Circle. And finally I'm going to check that you want to go ahead.

Here are the next steps I am going to take.

I'll contact the people whose names you give me and speak with them. In these Pre-Circle conversations I will hear their point of view on the Act/Event we have identified. Each person will have an opportunity to let me know who else needs to be present to resolve this conflict. We'll let you know of any additional people identified.

I will also ask them if they are willing to go forward with the Circle. No one person can keep the community from holding a Circle. So if any individual decides not to attend the Circle, I'll ask a colleague, who is an experienced Restorative Circle facilitator, to be a substitute so the conversation may go forward.

Once I have met with all the people called to the Circle, I'll set up a time for us to gather in our meeting space. We will use the reflective dialog process to ensure everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

The Circle supports connection and understanding of the feelings and needs of every person present around what is happening for each individual.

With this understanding, the community may plan what they would like to do next. The actions will be listed, we'll put a time frame on each action and then meet one more time in a Post Circle to evaluate if the desired change has been created or if there are further steps we'd like to take."

**"Do you have any questions?"**

## **Asking Permission/Consent to Proceed**

After answering any questions, ask:

**"Who needs to be present in the Circle to explore this conflict?"**

**"With these people present, are you willing to participate in this Circle?"**

Each person invited to the Circle is asked during their Pre-Circle if they are willing to participate in the Circle. This agreement strengthens the Circle process. If the person says "No" then explain substitution. See pages 11-12.

Express thanks when each Pre-Circle is complete.

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## **All Other Pre-Circles**

The Facilitator meets with the rest of the community members who are invited to the Circle. This includes individual Pre-Circles with the **Author** or **Receiver**. Additional Pre-Circles may be held with small groups of **Community Members** as well.

The **Act** is shared to begin, then the question to ask is:

**“What was said or done that is calling you to a Restorative Circle?”**

The Facilitator proceeds to reflect the meaning of what is said by the Author, Receiver or Community Members of the Pre-Circle. Listen and reflect each person until you feel you understand their point of view with regards to the conflict.

Then ask:

**“Who needs to be present in the Circle to explore this conflict?”**

**“With these people present, are you willing to participate in this Circle?”**

## **FACILITATOR PRE-CIRCLE**

The Facilitator Pre-Circle is an opportunity for the Facilitator(s) to check-in with another practiced Facilitator (Guide). This process checks on multi-partiality and trust in the Restorative Circle process, and identifies any need for support. The Guide **listens and reflects** with special attention to any feelings and needs heard.

These are the guiding questions:

Identify any idea or belief that the Facilitator may have towards aspects of the conflict or people involved in the conflict.

**“Is there a fixed idea or belief you are having about yourself, the process, or the other participants, that diminishes your ability to focus on the humanity of everyone involved?”**

**“As you look at the steps that you are going to take is there anything that comes up for which you think you’ll want support?”**

**“Do you know what you want to do to arrange for this support?”**

Confirm a willingness to participate.

**“Would you like to go ahead with facilitating this circle?”**

The Guide Facilitator asks these questions of the Facilitator(s) of the Circle. The Guide uses the reflective listening process in this conversation to allow the Facilitator to connect with their own internal thoughts and gain inner clarity on their own ideas/beliefs/values on the issues likely to be faced as the Circle unfolds.

The Guide reflects specific feelings, needs, values, thoughts or images that are live in the Facilitator regarding the process, people, and known issues of the conflict. This is a check on the Facilitator’s internal ability to be multi-partial.

The Facilitator Pre-Circle is an opportunity for the Facilitator to make requests for what they need in order to go ahead with the circle. The Facilitator is given the opportunity to confirm their willingness to facilitate the Circle.

The Facilitator Pre-Circle is used throughout the circle process, whenever the Facilitator feels the need for support as they facilitate a Circle and may be used more than once.

# CIRCLE

The Circle is the gathering at an agreed time and place of all those who have agreed to join the conversation. Author, Receiver and Community members sit together in the Circle. The only rule for Circle participants is to use the reflective listening process. The Facilitator's role is to follow what is being conveyed and to step in to translate or pick up missed meaning when individuals are having difficulty being heard.

The questions are designed to be open ended and nonjudgemental. Practice these as worded until you have a deep understanding of the meaning of the questions. They may feel like a mantra as you facilitate. Some answers may sound like answers to other questions. Circle members will share what they need to convey when they are comfortable. *Facilitators are not to decide what needs to be shared or when.* The conversation may move in multiple directions, beyond what you knew coming into the circle.

Allow for moments of silence. This invites space for participants to process what they hear and consider what they want to say.

Facilitator asks each guiding question until all present have an opportunity to answer.  
**Most often the person with the most energy or discomfort is asked to speak first.**  
A flow will naturally develop.

## Mutual Comprehension Question:

- “What would you like known, and by whom, about how you are right now in relation to the event and its consequences?”

## Self-Responsibility Question:

- “What would you like known, and by whom, about what you were looking for at the moment you chose to act?”

## Action Plan:

- “What would you like to see happen next?”
- “What would you like to offer?”
- “What would you like to request?”
- “When will we get back together for the Post-Circle?”

One key question to ask of the speaker: “**Is that what you wanted heard?**”

When necessary, interrupt to translate when meaning is lost, incomplete or breaks down into a back and forth. Resume process as soon as meaning begins to be reflected clearly once more. See Supporting the Dialogue Process, next page.

The community creates a plan to transform their relationships. Ideas may arise during the Circle. Record those as they happen. Identify an estimated timeframe for completion of each action.

## **Supporting the Dialogue Process**

When a response, judgement, or misunderstanding happens, the Facilitator may choose to interrupt to clarify the meaning of what the speaker wants known.

### **Response**

If a listener responds instead of reflecting, then the Facilitator has two options:

Continue with the speaker:

1. Ask the speaker, **“Is that what you wanted heard?”** (If no)
2. Give the speaker an opportunity to rephrase what they want understood.
3. Ask the listener, **“What do you hear now?”**

OR

Switch the roles in order to have the listener heard.

1. Ask the (original) speaker, **“What are you hearing (the person) say?”**
2. Ask the (original) listener, **“Is that what you wanted heard?”**

### **Translation: Exploring Judgements**

If a listener agrees with a judgement the speaker says, then the Facilitator may choose to inquire in the following way:

1. Look at the listener and say, **“I heard something a little different.”**
2. Then turn and look at the speaker and say, **“I think that I heard you say ………”**  
(Facilitator expresses the deeper meaning of what was heard.)
3. Check with the speaker, **“Is this what you wanted heard?”**
4. If this is yes, and/or the speaker adds more content, then the Facilitator turns to the listener and says, **“What did you hear (the speaker say) now?”**

### **Recovering Missed Meaning**

If something is said by the speaker that is missed by the listener, the Facilitator may choose to ask/inquire:

1. Look at the listener and say, **“I heard something else as well.”**
2. Then turn and look at the speaker and say, **“I think that I heard you say ………”**  
(Facilitator expresses the meaning that hasn't been reflected.)
3. Check with the speaker to be sure that the meaning is accurate (that is, checking to see if what the speaker said what the Facilitator shared in the translation).
4. If this is yes, and/or the speaker adds more content, then the Facilitator turns to the listener and says, **“What did you hear (the speaker say) now?”**

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## **Practice Circles**

During training and team practice we use the following definitions and agreements to enter into practice space.

**Live Conflict:** Conflict that is real and being experienced by someone who wishes to bring that situation into our practice. This conflict is a lived experience for this person.

**Live Person:** The person bringing a conflict for our practice time together. We say the conflict experienced in the life of this person or the conflict is real for this person.

**Live Circle:** This is a real Circle, we are no longer practicing. All participants are involved directly with the conflict. There may be one substitute, and still the Circle is considered a live (lived) experience.

**Substitutes in a practice Circle** will each take one role in the community for the person bringing the conflict.

**Facilitating during practice sessions:** Begin with the person bringing the conflict. Invite them to speak to each member of the community, giving each person a point of reference for being in the role they have taken. This is only used as a way of beginning a Practice Circle.

**Ending a Practice Circle:** At the end of the practice session, it is helpful to disengage from the roles held. The Facilitator may say:

“Breathe in and as you exhale, let go of the role you were playing.  
Breathe... let go of any unmet attachments to outcome for the practice session.  
Breathe... to come into the present moment within ourselves.”

## **POST-CIRCLE**

This gathering follows up with the community members on how they are about the action plan and its consequences. The Post Circle invites a check-in for everyone involved.

The Facilitator's role is to ask the question and follow the meaning as members of the community speak, supporting the dialog process so everyone is heard and understood.

One Question is asked:

**“What would you like known, and by whom, about how you are now in relation to the Action Plan and its consequences?”**

### **Potential Outcomes:**

**A. Celebrate** (when the community is satisfied) **or**

**B. Re-Engage** (when completed actions have not met needs)

The community may choose to revisit parts of the conflict not addressed by the Action Plan. Participants use reflective listening with each other.

**A. Understand and plan again** (when needs have not been met and new actions are sought) - Use reflective listening.

**B. Agree to disagree** (when action plan has not been carried out, yet the community agrees they have done the best they can at this time to understand and resolve the issues.)

### **Agreed Actions:**

Return to these questions if the community wishes to revisit the action plan.

**“What would you like to see happen next?”**

**“What would you like to offer?”**

**“What would you like to request?”**

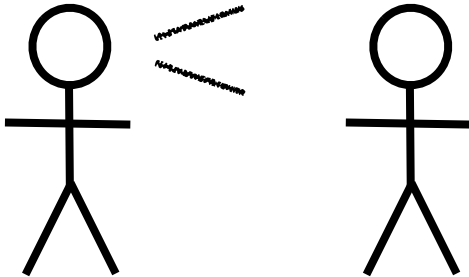
**“When will we get back together for another Post-Circle?”**



# The Reflective Dialogue Process

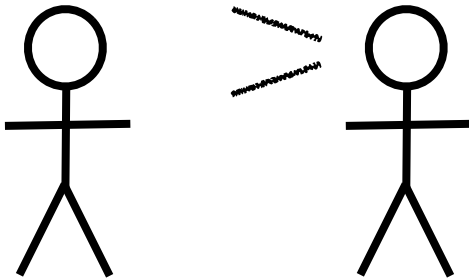
## Listening for Deeper Meaning

What do you want known and by whom?



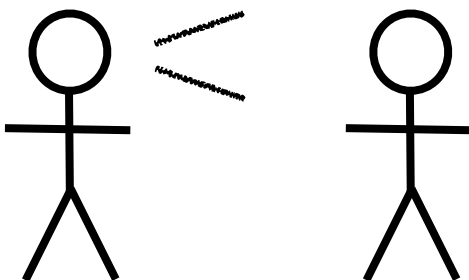
1. The speaker chooses a listener and responds to the guiding question for the round, addressing their answer to the listener. Everyone present will hear them.

What did you hear?



2. The listener shares the deeper meaning or essence of what they hear from the speaker.

Is that what you wanted understood?



3. The speaker confirms or corrects the understanding of the receiver.
  - “Yes, that’s it.”
  - “Yes and there is more...”
  - “No, I meant to say this.”

# The Questions for a Restorative Circle

## Pre-Circle:

1. What was said or done that:
  - a. you would like to bring to a Restorative Circle? (Initiator)
  - b. is calling you to a Restorative Circle? (All others)
2. Who else needs to attend?
3. Are you willing to go forward with the Circle?

## Circle:

1. What would you like known, and by whom, about how you are right now regarding the act and its consequences? (Feelings)
2. What would you like known, and by whom, about what you were looking for when you chose to act? (Needs)
3. What would you like to see happen next?
4. What would you like to offer/request?
5. When will we get back together for the Post-Circle?

## Post Circle:

1. How are you right now about the plan and its consequences?

## Facilitator Pre-Circle

1. Is there a fixed idea or belief you are having about yourself, the process or the other participants that diminishes your ability to focus on the humanity of everyone involved?
2. As you look at the steps that you are going to take, is there anything that comes up for which you think you'll want support?
3. Would you like to go ahead with facilitating this Circle?

# Substitution

Substitutes are trained Facilitators who come to the Circle in the place of someone who

- declines to attend the circle. OR
- is unavailable for the circle.
- The community has a right have a circle.
- One person can not stop a circle from going forward.
- Substitution allows the community to proceed with the Circle.

Substitution increases the degree of voluntary participation. Often individuals do not want to have someone speak in the circle on their behalf. There is sometimes a feeling of coercion that arises in individuals who are uncomfortable with regards to the conflict being brought to the Circle.

- Substitutes are recommended to have considerable experience with Restorative Circles. Preferably they have experience of being, at different times, Author, Receiver, Community member or Facilitator of a Circle.
- Substitution **involves** speaking from the point of view of being in the experience as heard during the Circle. “I respond as if I had this set of experiences.”
- Substitution **does not involve** “acting as if I were someone else.” Like in soccer, a substitute does not pretend to be the person they are replacing. The substitute occupies the position on the field, not the person who would otherwise be there.
- Substitutes do not enter into Action Agreements, beyond optionally agreeing to participate in the Post-Circle.
- The advantage a Substitute brings to the Circle is in their ability to:
  - Receive and express universal motivations for action.
  - Communicate with brevity, authenticity, simplicity, and precision.
  - Create opportunities for participants to speak to someone who is not present.
- Sharing the Agreed Action Plan with the person who was substituted for and inviting that person to the Post-Circle can be a way to remain transparent and to invite possible future participation.

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## Partial Substitution

The Concord UU Restorative Circle Facilitator Team created the role of Partial Substitution for situations where one person or multiple people were not able to be present AND they were uncomfortable having someone substitute for them.

The Partial Substitute is a trained facilitator who **only** reflects what they hear when a member of the circle wishes to speak to that person. This allows for community members, author and receiver to speak to the person/people who is/are not present in the Circle.

Thoughts and ideas spoken to the absent Circle members allow the community to hear the needs and feelings of those present expressed more fully. This allows for completeness in mutual understanding and self responsibility in the Circle.

Where multiple people are being substituted for, card stock or a piece of paper can be used to identify the person who is the reflective listener. Thus, one Facilitator may sit in the Circle as a Partial Substitute to reflect as multiple absent participants.

This idea developed by the RC Team at UU Concord, NH

Process developed by Dominic Barter. Adapted from materials by Gail Claspell.

# **Restorative Circle Systems**

## Keys for a Successful Restorative Circle (RC) System:

### **Community agreements/policy to use the RC system to resolve conflicts:**

- Agreement to use reflective dialogue process and call Circles as needed.
- Support from people who hold power in the community including: elders, longtime members, leaders, and volunteers.
- Engage these people with the RC process.
- Educate the community

### **Create a team of facilitators** who support one another.

- Create agreements for co-facilitation.
- Facilitator Team - meets for regular practice to:
  - Practice co-facilitation.
  - Create and use the RC system.
  - Support one another.
  - Look for ways to educate the community.
- Facilitator Pre-Circle support available for every Facilitator.
- Connect with and attend ongoing RC training opportunities.

### **Identify a space for gatherings.** Consider the:

- Symbolic nature of the space (history, location, associations).
- Community comfort in the space.

### **Educate the community**

- Education for community members about the RC process, dialogue process, availability of and how to access the system.
- New community member education.
- Practice the Reflective Listening dialogue process throughout the community:
  - At board, committee, and community meetings.
  - In personal and relational conversations, from time to time, with permission.

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### **Access for all**

- Anyone can call a Circle, at any time.
- Create a central access point for requests, monitored by the team.
- System to alert the facilitation team that a Circle is called.
- Create an agreed response period from the RC facilitator team, such as within 24 hours of a request. Share this with the community.

### **Substitution process**

- The community has a right to have a Restorative Circle, no one person can stop the Circle from going forward.
- Substitution creates opportunity for participants to speak to someone who is not present. See pages 11-12.

# Glossary

**Act** - event, something that was said or done as if a video camera caught it.

**Agreed Actions or Plan** - part of the Circle process where the Community requests or offers what they would like to see happen next (Plan).

**Author** - is the person who did the identified act or is the person who caused the event. Often there are multiple authors in a conflict.

**Circle** - the Facilitator gathers the Author, Receiver and involved Conflict Community for a conversation to create mutual understanding, self-responsibility, and a plan of agreed actions. One step of the Restorative Circle process.

**Co-Facilitator** - the people who have agreement together to hold the container for the dialogue.

**Conflict Community** - the people effected by the conflict; community of care; group of individuals who need to be present to resolve the conflict.

**Event** - something at the core of the conflict that can be seen as if a video camera caught it.

**Facilitator** - the person who 'makes it easier' for the conflict community to gather for conversation. The person who holds the container for the dialogue.

**Facilitator Pre-Circle** - the Facilitator meets with another Facilitator (Guide) for specific questions to explore support needed, confirm a multi-partial attitude, and agreement to facilitate. One step of the Restorative Circle process.

**Garden of Conflict** - aspects of the conflict, includes many acts, authors, and receivers.

**Guide** - supports the Circle process by asking the Facilitator Pre-Circle questions, listening and reflecting with special attention to any feelings and needs heard.

**Initiator** - the person calling the circle, could be the author, receiver or community member.

**Live Conflict** - conflict that is real and being experienced by someone who wishes to bring that situation into a practice session. This conflict is a lived experience for this person.

**Live Person** - the person bringing a conflict for our practice time together. We say the conflict experienced in the life of this person or the conflict is real for this person.

**Live Circle:** - this is a real Circle, we are no longer practicing. All participants are involved directly with the conflict. There may be one substitute, and still the Circle is considered a live (lived) experience.

**Multi-partial** - seeing the humanity in every person involved in the garden of conflict; take sides equally with everyone.

“Outrageously biased on the side of every person on the planet.”

~ Dominic Barter

**Mutual Comprehension** - part of the circle process where the community of care comes to understand the feelings around the conflict and its consequences.

**Partial Substitute** - a trained Facilitator who reflects meaning on behalf of a person or people absent from the circle. This person only reflects what is being said. One facilitator may reflect as multiple absent people.

**Plan** - see Agreed Actions

**Pre-Circle** - series of individual private conversations the Facilitator has with the Initiator, Author, Receiver and Community. One step of the Restorative Circle process.

**Post-Circle** - an agreement to check how satisfied the Community is with Agreed Actions, Plan and the consequences. One step of the Restorative Circle process.

**Receiver** - a person to whom the event/act happened. Often there are multiple receivers in a conflict.

**Reflective Listening** - the process of listening for the meaning of what a speaker is saying, creating understanding and opening the door to conversation when people are in conflict with one another.

**Self-Responsibility** - part of the circle process where the community members come to know each other's needs that created the conflict.

**Substitute** - a trained Facilitator who sits in the Circle for a member of the community not present in the circle. The Facilitator reflects meaning when asked and if moved to speak, speaks briefly, authentically and precisely, as if they were experiencing the situation.

**Substitution** - is a process whereby a Facilitator speaks from the point of view of being in the experience as heard during the Circle.

**Translation** - the Facilitator assists the reflection process to illuminate flow of meaning between two individuals.