



What are Circles?

Circles are a structured way of bringing people together. Active across a wide range of cultures and traditions, circle processes are intended to foster a sense of respect and equality among participants.

Circle Principles

- Respect for people’s personal experiences, needs, and feelings.
- Opportunity for all voices to be heard.

Circle Basics

- Circle Facilitator – an individual who accepts responsibility for helping circle participants create and maintain a safe space.
- Setting – chairs arranged in a circle with an open space in the center. (Floor seating is also an option.)
- Centerpiece – an object(s) of significance or interest that creates a focus and offers a place for participants to rest their eyes.
- Talking Piece – an object generally passed clockwise from person to person around the circle that designates whose turn it is to speak. While use of the talking piece invites all voices to be heard, it does not require the holder to speak. The holder can pass. The talking piece is never tossed across the circle as this undermines the principle of all voices having the opportunity to be heard.
- Shared Agreements – guidelines describing behaviors that the participants feel will make the space safe for them to share openly. Shared Agreements are often posted in a manner visible to all participants. Many MPS circle facilitators adapt PBIS expectations for their Shared Agreements.
 - Be Respectful (Speak with respect. Listen with respect. Respect the Talking Piece.)
 - Be Responsible
 - Be Safe
- Ceremony/Ritual/Tradition – opening and closing procedures that contribute to a sense of safety by providing structure, consistency, and predictability.