Restorative Practices and the Skills of Circle Keeping

Restorative Practices build community and can help set things right when the integrity of the community is challenged by harmful behaviors.

When people come together for restorative interactions they sit in circles. Circle dialogue is a fundamental element of restorative dialogue.

Classroom circles support the two main goals of restorative practices: building community; and responding to harms through dialogue that sets things right.

Restorative Community in the Classroom

Restorative practices cultivate a culture in which everyone feels like they belong. They build a particular sense of community in which every member - students, teacher, parent volunteers, and aides; feel that they are *seen, heard*, and *respected.*

The materials in this packet are sequenced to support steady growth in the understandings and skills needed to support authentic dialogue and problem solving. They emphasize fairness through understanding, and including everyone who is immediately affected by challenging circumstances in discovering the solutions.

Goals for Students

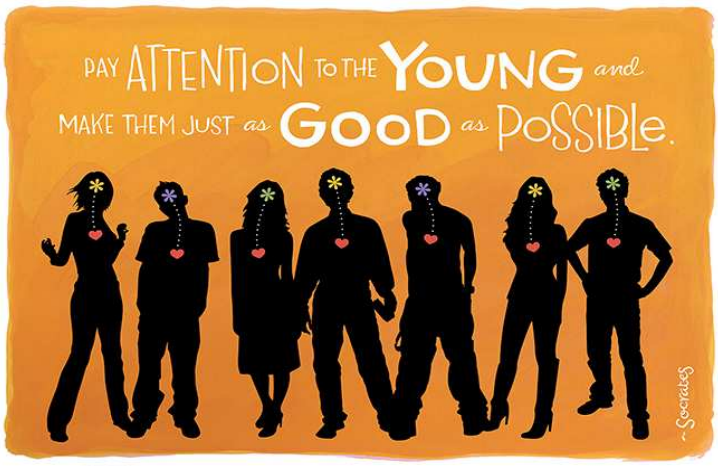
- Students will learn to value and regularly use pro-active, positive ways to build and maintain a peaceful classroom community.
- Students will develop and enhance positive and supportive connections with peers.
- Students will develop an understanding of the principles and vocabulary of restorative justice.
- Students will learn how to participate in circle dialogues, including the four circle guidelines.
- Students will learn to use and respect a talking piece.
- Students will learn how to use restorative questions to support conflict resolution and other types of communication.
- Students will learn to identify who is affected by misbehaviors, and how.
- Students will contribute to developing appropriate ideas for how to make things right when harms have occurred.
- Students will learn how and when to ask for a restorative circle.
- Students will learn to communicate how they are affected by given situations using affective statements and restorative questions.

Goals for Teacher

- Teachers will understand the core principles of restorative justice and restorative practices and how they differ from traditional or punitive approaches.
- Teachers will know how to use restorative practices in many situations where punitive discipline approaches might have been used in the past.
- Teachers will know how to introduce and lead circle dialogues.
- Teachers will know how to transition into and out of "circle time" and can switch roles between circle keeper and teacher effectively.
- Teachers will have an understanding of the principle of "connection before content" as it applies to restorative circles.
- Teachers will know how to sequence activities to build trust among students so they become more willing to communicate authentically.
- Teachers will know restorative questions and how to use them.
- Teachers will understand affective communication and will experience how it supports classroom discipline and community building.

Goals for Classroom Community

- The classroom community will have established agreements about how to participate in circle.
- Community members will share a sense of responsibility for maintaining agreements and many members will do so proactively during circle time and at other times, including out of classroom time.
- The classroom community will identify specific issues to address and will have honest, authentic discussions about these issues.
- Procedures will be established for calling attention to issues and conflicts and for requesting help.
- Procedures will be established for engaging in restorative dialogues around issues and conflicts.
- It will be emotionally, psychologically, and physically safe for students to share concerns about conflicts, issues, and behaviors that are affecting them.
- There will be high participation by students in circle dialogues, with little or no passing.



Circles 4 Change

Council Circles: Forming Relationships and Building Community

Classroom circles as described in the pages that follow are an ideal format for this inquiry. The learning process can be accelerated by acknowledging this inquiry frankly, and then inviting students to use circle time to compare and contrast their own social strategies. After gaining some experience with restorative practices, try putting questions like these into the center of the circle, and let the talking piece go around.

- What has worked well for making friends?
- What have you found works for solving problems between friends?
- What can people do to prevent misunderstandings?

There are many other possible questions. The key is to ask questions that are truly meaningful to students…often the unspoken questions that are at the core of each student's social life. These questions drive what is sometimes called the "implicit curriculum;" simply making them explicit by bringing them into circle is one of the most skillful methods of social/emotional instruction.

Circle Dialogue and Circle Keeping

Sitting in a circle is a fundamentally different experience than sitting in rows, or meeting across a desk. When we are in rows there is generally someone standing in front, commanding attention. Clearly this is the person who is in charge, who has the answers, and to whom the group is accountable. When we are meeting with someone who faces us from behind a desk, we also know instinctively that the authority and power belongs with that person. These arrangements have their appropriate functions and restorative practices are intended to complement rather than replace them completely. They can be effective. However, their effectiveness may have unintended consequences. One of these is the implied lesson that the responsibility for the functioning of the community is on the shoulders of the person who holds authority.

When we sit in a circle we experience a stronger sense of community. Every person in the circle shares responsibility for its functioning. Circle culture is more "yes and" than "either or." *Yes,* there is a leader, *and* each person takes the lead in turn, each time it is their turn to speak. *Yes,* some guidelines are given *and* the group makes its own agreements. Decisions are made, but by consensus of the whole group, and sometimes this means decisions come slowly or take unexpected forms.

Thus, one of the main purposes of circle dialogue is building community. Another purpose is supporting the kinds of honest, authentic dialogue that is necessary to effectively respond to challenging behavior and circumstances. These two intentions for circles take shape as two different types of circle: *community building* and *responsive.* A premise that runs throughout this manual is that *responsive circles* (for responding to misbehavior and harm) work best in classrooms where a foundation has been developed through *community building circles.*

The Shape of the Circle

The physical arrangement is important and greatly affects the quality of the circle. Arrange the classroom or other space so that students can be in a circle. The operational definition of the circle shape is that everyone can see every face without having to lean far forward. Sometimes the space available doesn't allow forming a perfect circle, and you'll have to make do with the best available alternative.

Circles work best when the physical space has an open feeling of no barriers between participants. Arrange the space so there are no tables or desks between students or in the middle of the circle. If your classroom or the furniture you have does not support this perhaps there is another place on campus where you can go for your circle meetings.

Acoustics are another important factor. Some rooms are acoustically jarring, with surfaces that reflect and amplify sound, making it difficult to hear. Many cafeterias and multipurpose rooms have this acoustically harsh quality. They can give students a sense of privacy within the background noise, thus encouraging side conversations. Other rooms (libraries are often like this) have a way of mellowing sound and giving a quieter feel; this is far preferable. Outdoor spaces can work well if the background noises are not too intense. You may find that a circle on a playground during the "quiet time" during recess works fine, or you may discover that neighborhood delivery trucks are much louder than you ever realized!

Every Voice Heard: How to Use the Talking Piece

A talking piece is used frequently during circle. It can be anything that is easily passed from one student to another. Beautiful objects found in nature make great talking pieces-feathers, driftwood, river stones, seashells. Animal figurines are appreciated by many students. Some classes adopt a particular talking piece and use it for every circle. Some put a variety of talking pieces in the center and let the student who starts a round choose one for the round.

Some classes make a project of creating a talking piece and then over time adding to it. For example, you can keep a box of large beads and then as a class define a trigger event that signifies when a new bead will be added by lacing it on to a string that is tied to the talking piece. Perhaps this occurs when a conflict has been named and solved. Perhaps it can be as simple as a new bead (or feather, or ribbon, etc.) for each time the class meets in a circle.

You will not always use a talking piece; sometimes it will make sense to simply call on students who raise hands. But the great advantage of a talking piece going around the circle is that each and every student knows that they will have a chance to put their voice into the center, and to be seen by others. When you do set the talking piece aside, do so explicitly - call attention to the shift away from the talking piece by saying, "I'm setting the talking piece aside for now." Do the same when you pick it back up.

One of the most important tasks of circle keeping is defending the talking piece. This may mean continually reminding students to respect the talking piece by giving the person who is holding it their full attention. Work toward getting students involved in this; perhaps assign two or three each circle to act as "talking piece defenders."

A Circle Keeper's Toolkit

These are some of the things we keep in our Circle Kit, which is a basket we carry with us to all of our circles. You can create your own toolkit that reflects your particular style of circle leadership.

- Bell-a small "singing bowl" style meditation bell.
- Talking pieces: a selection of 3 to 6, various items including sticks, stones, seashells, feathers, stuffed animals, toys, and so on.
- Fabrics: a few fabrics that have rich colors and/or textures, sufficient to cover an area about 3' on each side.
- Battery powered LED candles are a safe way to create a sense of warmth emanating from the center of the circle. Placed in the center, they represent the traditional "children's fire" kept to remind the community to act with awareness of its responsibility to the children present, and those yet to be born.
- Bowl: Find a handmade bowl that can hold water or stones. You can float flowers in this bowl.
- Keepsake: anything meaningful to the student
- Rattle: Any kind of rattle will do. It can be used as a talking piece, or can be given to a student to use during the circle to signal if the circle needs to refocus.
- Stones: A selection of small polished stones or smooth river rocks
- Animal Figurines: Make great talking pieces representing each animal's unique characteristics. If given a selection of different animals, students will often choose one whose characteristics mirror the current process of the classroom community.

Focus the Circle with High Quality Prompting Questions

High quality prompts are questions that give the circle its energy and focus. The circle keeper asks a question and invites everyone on the circle to respond (including the circle keeper). Some questions are proactive and are about building and maintaining community. *Check in questions* are an example of this. Some prompts are about responding to specific challenges. *Restorative questions* are a sequence of prompts that guide dialogues leading to understanding the consequences of harmful behaviors, and agreements about how to repair those harms. *Closure questions* invite reflection on what has happened in the circle.

High quality prompts have these characteristics:

- They are **relevant**: questions about something that is real and meaningful to the lives of students.
- Often a high quality prompt **gives voice to existing unspoken questions** that are in the social field; consider this: "What does it mean to be popular?" as an example of a question that is implicit in many students' minds, but is perhaps rarely discussed openly.
- **Simple and clear** language is used.
- They are **open ended**: not yes or no questions, but worded in a way that invites deeper inquiry.
- They are about **inquiry, not advocacy**; discovery, not teaching facts or proving a point. Thus, a prompt framed as "Why is it always best to be polite?" may be helpful, but it also assumes its own conclusion; you may as well say, "It's best to be polite. Tell me why." It might be more interesting to ask, "What makes relationships work out well?"
- Often prompts **are related to current events** for which time is not planned in the curriculum. In the week after the earthquakes and tsunamis that devastated Japan we made time in all of our circles for students to share their questions and concerns. It was simply a matter of asking, "Does anyone have anything they would like to say about the earthquakes and tsunamis?" And you bet they did; the emotional load carried by many of these students was immense. Circles were a perfect opportunity to make room for them to ask questions.

Questions for Getting Acquainted

Share a happy childhood memory. If you could be a superhero, which superpower would you choose and why? == How would your best friend describe you? == What would you NOT want to change about your life? Why? == If you could talk to someone from your family who is no longer alive, who it would be? What would you want to talk about?
If you had an unexpected free day and could anything you wished, what would you do? == If you were an animal, what type would you be and why? == What is a memory you have to time spent in nature? == Who do you respect, and why? == What change would you like to see in your community? What can you do to promote that change? == What was a time when you were outside your comfort zone? What did you do, and what were the results? == What is it like for you when someone is angry at you?

Restorative Dialogue Prompts

What happened and what were you thinking at the time of the incident?

What have you thought about since?

Who has been affected by what happened and how?

What about this has been hardest for you? What do you think needs to be done to make things as right as possible?

Circles 4 Change

- They **support re-storying**. Re-storying is the process by which we loosen the grip that stories that we have constructed about each other and our world have on us, thus opening up new possibilities for how we see and experience each other
- They **energize the class** and get the attention of students.
- They invite deeper follow up questions.

The Circle has a Center

The center of the circle is an important element. While it can be left clear, it is often more powerful when something is placed in the center to provide focus. Creating the center can be part of the ritual of moving into circle time. Students often enjoy doing this; after modeling it once or twice ask for two or three volunteers to come and arrange the center, working with elements that are kept in a basket or box for that purpose. A colorful piece of fabric with a few small items such as flowers, feathers, a selection of talking pieces, and so on will do nicely. A bowl of water in the center can help bring a sense of calm to the circle, and can be helpful when there is conflict or tension in the room.

It is traditional in circles to speak into the center. The idea is that everyone's voice is added to the center, and it is from the center that the wisdom of the class will begin to emerge. Once someone has spoken into the center, their contribution becomes the property of the circle. It becomes part of a shifting story, a pathway toward an understanding that comes clearer little by little.

Respecting Each One's Experience: The Principle of Non-Interference

The principle of non-interference means that we simply welcome what people say without trying to influence them. If someone is in pain, we listen and allow simple listening to be a comfort; we do not try to take away their pain. If someone is confused, we simply listen and trust that in its own way the circle will provide clarification. If someone is angry we honor their anger. We don't indulge in psychological maneuvers. We don't directly correct, try to counsel, heal, or "fix" anyone's experience in anyway. We simply listen.

This principle, so very important in building a community where people feel safe to express themselves, also applies to restorative dialogue. When we use the restorative questions we are not trying to force an outcome. We are simply giving a structure to the circle so that each person's voice can be heard. When all voices are in the center, the circle has a way of surfacing what is true, what is needed, and what to do next.

There are exceptions when it is important to give information. We didn't practice non-interference when students shared their fear that the Japanese tsunami was about to strike their school. We gave information. This illustrates an important point: we don't want to be rigid about any of this. Non-interference and the other guidelines in this manual are principles, not commandments.

Building Trust in the Circle

When there is trust between students it creates a social environment in which students can safely risk self- disclosure, authenticity, confrontation, and expressing affection. Trust is not automatic however, and students have likely had many experiences of broken trust: confidences betrayed by gossip are a near universal experience, for example. Restorative circles are always by invitation; students should not feel compelled to share when they do not feel emotionally safe with those who are in the circle.

It can take considerable time and effort to build an atmosphere of trust. There is a simple way to tell how trust is coming along: observe the degree of participation in the circle. **If many students are passing and if sharing is superficial, you may take this as a reliable indicator that students do not feel safe to share; there is insufficient trust in the community.**

We come to trust others' good intentions through experiencing them responding to us in a respectful way. It is perhaps a mark of wisdom to withhold sharing anything intimate with those who have in the past belittled us. As circle leaders we should encourage people to share, but avoid encouraging them too much. Always remember that there may be very good reasons why students are not sharing. Let the maturation of the circle have its slow, positive influence on students' sharing.

We discover how much we can trust others through interactions that test their intentions. If a student shares a thought or idea that is well received then that student begins to trust the good intentions of the people with whom it was shared. On the other hand, if the idea is belittled or if the student is mocked in any way then a very different conclusion is reached: that these are not people to be trusted with information that is in any way intimate. Yet the student's need for belonging remains strong. The problem now is, "How can I belong, without being intimate?" This problem is solved in many ways, none of which are conducive to a truly healthy community. Becoming a bully is one solution, for example.

In restorative circles we build trust by giving students safe ways to test how much they can trust each other. We begin in our first circles by using prompting questions that invite low risk answers. Students can give answers that do not expose their inner lives; thus, they can feel fairly safe from social consequences such as teasing. Students should not be required to take risks that are unreasonable, including social risks in socially hostile environments. Students have sound instincts about how much self- disclosure is safe; their level of participation is a reliable indicator of the risk environment.

Teachers and other circle leaders can observe students' level of participation, along with how students react to each other's answers, and steadily increase the depth of intimacy and authenticity invited by prompting questions, choosing prompts that invite more intimate exposure of personal thoughts and feelings. This carefully managed and sequenced journey into greater intimacy and authenticity is a cornerstone of building community with circle dialogue.

An example of a low risk prompt is, "Who is a hero of yours from real life or the movies, and why do you choose this person?" Notice that students have a lot of choice in how they answer. They can say a lot or a little. They can copy what someone else said or they can be original. Whatever their answer, they will have an opportunity to gauge how other students respond. Will they be made fun of? Will their answers help them get to know each other better and perhaps find surprising connections?

When all students are willing to answer questions such as this more or less authentically the time comes to move to questions that are more revealing, and therefore riskier to answer. For example, the prompt might be something like, "Tell the story of a time you had a conflict with someone else and what happened." This subject is relevant to the lives of all students, and they may have a deep desire to speak about it. But it also invites answers that are more intimate and revealing. If trust has been built in the classroom they will welcome the opportunity to talk openly. But if they know they will be ridiculed or that other unpleasant social consequences will result it makes perfectly good sense for them to either not answer or to do so in a superficial way.

In summary, using level of participation and quality of sharing as a gauge, move steadily from safer prompting questions toward questions that invite more self-disclosure and that focus on things that really matter to students.

Characteristics of Prompting Questions	
…for Building Trust and Connectedness	…for Building Intimacy and Authenticity
o Non-controversial subjects o Easy to answer without introspection o Wide range of choice in answers that are honest o Fun and fast, invite lots of smiling o Not particularly "edgy;" do not invite students into new territory o Primarily about story telling connecting, rather than content	o Subjects may be controversial o Less choice in how the question may be answered honestly o Answers may require time and introspection o Often edgy, inviting students to share in ways that are new or unfamiliar o Primarily about emotional expression and developing social skills (content)

Guidelines are Cornerstones of Trust

There are standards for behavior in circles. One of the primary tasks of a circle leader is to teach, reinforce, and act as guardian of these standards. From long experience with many types of circles in many settings, the community of circle keepers has settled on **four core guidelines** (besides the all-important guideline to respect the talking piece, addressed earlier):

1. **Speak from the heart:** This means speaking for yourself, talking about what is true for you based on your own experiences. When we speak from the heart we are aiming for eloquence, for choosing words that accurately communicate what we hold to be important.

2. **Listen from the heart**: We are used to judging other people. Sometimes without even knowing anything about another person we will make assumptions about them. These assumptions can keep us from really hearing what they have to say…and what they have to say may be something that is important and helpful. So when we listen from the heart we are trying to set aside any stories we may hold about the person. This opens up the possibility of making wonderful discoveries about, and surprising connections with, each other.

3. **Speak spontaneously**: In circles we discover that we can trust that we will know what to say when it is our turn to speak. We don't have to mentally rehearse while we are waiting for the talking piece to come our way. When we find that we are rehearsing (everyone does) we gently remind ourselves "no need to rehearse" and bring our attention back to the person who is speaking. This guideline is sometimes referred to simply as "be spontaneous."

4. **Speak leanly:** Keep in mind the limits of time and making room for everyone to speak. This intention is also called "lean expression." It is related to "speak from the heart" because we often find that when we speak carefully we can express ourselves with fewer words than we would normally use, and that when we do our words often have more impact. One way to think about this is, when you are considering what to say, ask, "Does it serve this circle in a good way?"

Speak what will serve yourself…the circle… the highest good.

Circles 4 Change

Agreements are Also Cornerstones of Trust

The guidelines are nearly universal in circle culture. In addition to the guidelines, each classroom makes its own **agreements.** Agreements are negotiated by the class. Agreement within the circle is not a one-time discussion; it should be ongoing.

The process of coming to and maintaining agreements is governed by "meta agreements" (agreements about agreements). These meta-agreements should be explicit and understood by everyone. Your class may come up with their own list, but common meta-agreements include:

- Anyone can ask for an agreement at any time.
- Anyone can ask to modify an agreement at any time.
- If there is no consensus about a proposed agreement, it is not an agreement, and it is the responsibility of each member of the circle to be mindful of this fact. For example, if even a single student does not agree to keep things shared in the circle confidential, then there is no confidentiality agreement and all students should keep this in mind when they share.
- Maintaining the agreements is everyone's responsibility (not just the teacher's).

Mandated Reporting, Agreements, and Trust

In schools, circle leaders are usually teachers or some other professional who is a mandated reporter. It is very important to clarify with the students what this means at the outset, and to remind them of this from time to time. Clearly describe exactly what kinds of things you must report if they come up. If you are not certain, please review your district's mandated reporting policy and any applicable professional guidelines.

We have witnessed several occasions when students shared in circle sensitive information about their family lives. These students felt so relieved to have a forum in which they were respectfully listened to that they took the opportunity to share what were for them very weighty and confusing matters. In one middle school class we stopped a young man in mid share, telling him that while we recognize how important the subject was, classroom circles were not an appropriate place to share. In this instance he was talking about his father, describing behaviors that seemed emotionally abusive. It was painful to stop him from sharing; one has to consider, "Where else in his world does he have an opportunity to discuss these things?"

We held a staff circle to explore the incident and the questions it raised. One of these issues was articulated by the students themselves: "You invite us to talk about what really matters, and when we do you tell us this is not the right place." A conclusion we reached in our staff circle was that we must be more mindful and proactive about communicating the intention of the circles. We acknowledged that we did not have parent consent to talk about family matters in circles, and that it is a political reality that restorative practices programs are vulnerable to parent complaints. Another conclusion was that we agreed with the students, and shared among ourselves our grief that we were not able to use our circles to meet this particular need.

The take away lesson here is to be proactive about coming to agreements, and to pay careful attention to maintaining them. Otherwise it will be very easy to lose trust in the circle.

Community Building (Proactive) and Response to Harms: Two Circle Themes

Circles generally have two types of business to address. The first is *community building:* establishing contact with the people, having the time and opportunity to fully show up, to experience being seen and heard. The second is *responding to harm,* which means having sometimes difficult dialogues in which harms are discussed and pathways toward making things right are agreed upon.

- **Community Building Circles** are about giving students opportunity to get to know each other and establish positive connections, including agreements about how they ought to treat each other. Every circle includes community building activities in the beginning. Some circles focus exclusively on this task by building and deepening connections among students.

  Connection can be invited in several dimensions besides the interpersonal. There is connecting to physical sensation, for example. Before passing the talking piece you can invite students to sit quietly with their eyes closed and tune in to what their bodies are feeling. The same goes for emotions, and for what thoughts or concerns might be present. The aim here is to support students in whatever process they are feeling; to give permission to "come as you are." This in turn can support the authenticity of the dialogue when the circle moves into taking care of business such as discussing conflicts or other class issues.

- **Responsive Circles** use specific high quality questions to explore challenging circumstances and move toward making things right. Choosing questions that are "real" for the students is essential to eliciting *content that matters.* When the content matters, the circle will be energized and focused.

  The Restorative Questions included in this packet articulate the real, actual questions that exist when there is conflict or when someone has harmed someone else. Students readily become engaged with these questions because the content of the circle is truly relevant to their lives; it matters.

Circles 4 Change

Sequence of Events in a Circle

The sequence of events is important. If you establish a **Circle Pattern** from the beginning, and use it consistently, students will know what to expect. The following sequence works well, although not every element is included in every circle. Each step in the sequence is discussed below.

Starting the Circle 5 10 minutes	1. Arrive (circle keeper centers self) 2. State the purpose of the circle 3. Open the Circle 4. Teach and Remember Circle Guidelines 5. Make and Remember Agreements
Doing the Work of the Circle 15 30 minutes	6. **Connection**: Check in Round with Talking Piece**;** 7. Core Activities: • Community Building/Connection • Restorative Practices Content or Deeper Connection. 8. **Closure:** Check out Round
Ending the Circle 5 minutes	9. Close the circle 10. Debrief with colleagues

Step 1: Arrive (before the circle): Check in with yourself prior to starting the circle. Assess your energy level, your emotional state, physical condition, and anything else that will have an impact on how you show up as a circle keeper. The goal is not necessarily to change anything, but simply to be aware. This awareness of your actual condition can be a powerful ally in circle keeping.

Step 2: Opening the Circle: After the students are seated in a circle, it is very helpful to have a routine that you use as a ceremony at the beginning of each circle. This marks a transition from regular classroom time into the "special" non-ordinary time of circle. This is a good time to place items into the center of the circle to help give it focus. Some teachers read a poem or some inspirational prose, or place a battery powered candle or flowers in the center.

Step 3: Teach Circle Guidelines: Remind the class of, or ask them to recall, the guidelines that reliably help circles function well. Write them on the board as students recall or use posters. They are:

1. **Respect the talking piece**
a. Give those who hold it your full attention
b. When you are holding it give full attention to your truth
c. Speak to the center of the circle
d. Handle the talking piece respectfully
2. **Speak from the heart:** Speak for yourself: your perspectives, needs, experiences
a. Trust that what comes from the heart will be what the circle needs
3. **Listen from the heart**: Let go of stories that make it hard to hear others
4. **Speak leanly**: without feeling rushed, say what you need to say ("lean expression")
5. Trust that you will know what to say when it is your turn to speak: **speak spontaneously**.

Step 4: Make and Remember Agreements: In addition to the intentions, which apply to all circles, each individual class should be given multiple opportunities to make additional agreements, for example about confidentiality, gossip, and so on. Let the group find its own wording. Use a like "fists to five" to generate consensus. All agreements should be by consensus. Agreements are not imposed by an authority; they are negotiated by the group.

Step 5: Connection: Do a check in Round with the talking piece. Begin every circle with a check in round, in which all students are invited to respond to a question. This gives students a chance to put their voice into the circle and feel connected. In the first circles, keep this question very low risk, and make it progressively more personal at a pace the circle can handle. It can be helpful to ask students for ideas about check in questions. Relevant questions are preferable…meaning those questions that have to do with the actual situation. So, if the students have just returned from a holiday, a relevant question might be "share something memorable from your holiday."

Step 6: Responding to Challenging Circumstances: Restorative Content. If there are "live" issues to discuss, this is the time to move into them with restorative dialogue. It is important to name the issue clearly and accurately; it's best when this comes from the students, but can also work when issues are named by the teacher. Lessons 3 and 4 in Part 3 of this manual help students learn how to identify and name issues. Note that the approach used in these lessons is to *learn about* restorative dialogue by *engaging in* it, through progressively more direct and challenging dialogues.

Step 7: Closure Question. Ask students to comment on their experience in the circle. If you have very little time (as is often the case) ask for a two word checkout: "Say two words about your experience in the circle today." This "rounds out" the circle.

Step 8: Close the circle: In a way that is intentional – and with a respectful emphasis, away the center, ring a bell, or make some other small gesture to signal moving back from circle time into ordinary time.

Step 9: Debrief with colleagues: What did you learn? * Any surprises? * What memorable things happened that you want to remember? * What frustrations did you encounter? * Find a trusted friendly colleague who is also doing circles and debrief each week with these questions or similar ones. Sit in a circle and use a talking piece…trust the circle

Circles 4 Change