

## What is a Sharing/Talking Circle?

The sharing circle is intended to be a safe place to speak one's mind and heart. A space to be honest and vulnerable; however, it is also a space to only share what one is comfortable with. Traditionally, there is a talking piece/item to pass around; whoever is holding the talking piece speaks, and everyone else in the circle listens. (For COVID safety now use a hand gesture to prompt the person beside you, or in online circles you can use a visual circle of names on a slide.) A talking circle helps us process out loud what we've experienced; it allows us to share their thoughts and feelings, to ask questions, and to hear about how others were impacted by the experience or learning.

### Guidelines:

- Introduce yourself when it's your turn.
- Practice active listening. Nod your head, try to make eye contact with the person speaking, your body language speaks volumes!
- Avoid commenting. In circle, the person whose turn it is is the one who speaks, and everyone else listens. Refrain from commenting on other people's words, just speak for yourself - crosstalk is prohibited. (And don't laugh unless there is an obviously funny remark!)
- Follow the Circle Direction. If someone breaks the sharing circle by talking out of turn, the facilitator will interrupt and remind that person of the guidelines/expectation to honor the person who is currently speaking.
- You can pass if you can't or don't want to speak - you can also ask the facilitator to come back to you at the end of the circle if you need more time to gather your thoughts
- Everything said in the circle is confidential. If you wish to share a story that you heard, ask the sharer's permission.
- If time allows, the facilitator may go around the circle multiple times, asking participants to reflect on different questions, as relevant.
- Chat Comments (online) - ask yourself if commenting through online chat will redirect the attention of the circle away from the speaker, or respectfully record their wise words.

**In respect to COVID and online meetings,** create a slide with a circle and write the names around the circle so that folks know when it is their turn.

*(This is just an example only)*

