



Circle Activity

Conduct a community circle in the classroom to discuss peacemaking. Everyone can sit on the floor or in chairs in a circle. A talking piece - a stone, a feather, a stick - is used to direct the conversation. The circle keeper passes the talking piece in a clockwise direction. Whoever has the object has the floor, and everyone else listens. He or she may speak or pass the talking object to the next person in the circle. The talking piece may be passed around the circle several times. All opinions are honored in the circle. There are no right or wrong answers.

When holding the talking piece you show respect to the circle and to each other by:

- Speaking from the heart;
- Speaking with respect (no name calling or put downs);
- Speaking briefly so that everyone will have time to speak;
- Speaking on the topic.

KEEPER'S ROLE

The keeper of the circle may summarize ideas that have been expressed, and pose other questions to be discussed. The keeper may write ideas on poster paper so that all can keep track of the discussion. The keeper may open or close the circle session with a reading or poem about peace, about community or about hope.

TALKING PIECE

Encourage participants to create or find his or her own talking piece or to make a class talking piece. Any object can be a talking piece, provided it is not too large, and has a meaning that is connected to ideas of community, caring and peace. Participants can share their object and its meaning in the first go-around of the circle. Keep the pieces in a special place. Use one talking piece per circle.

Make time to continue discussing the spirit of the circle on a weekly or daily basis to the end of the school or program year. Challenge participants to look for peacemaking activities in their school, community, state, or in the world, and to share their observations at each circle meeting.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Here are some prompts for a circle meeting.

I AM A PEACEFUL PERSON WHEN I...

I THINK EVERYONE CAN HELP TO
MAKE THE PEACE BY...

SOMEONE WHO (OR SOMETHING WHICH)
HELPS ME BE PEACEFUL IS...

A PEACEFUL SCHOOL SOUNDS LIKE,
LOOKS LIKE, FEELS LIKE...

I CAN MAKE THE PEACE BY...

PEACEMAKING IS HARD TO DO BECAUSE...

ADULTS CAN HELP TO MAKE THE PEACE BY...

Use the booklet *You're The One or Talk and Listen* for other discussion ideas. (See Tool Kit order form)

This activity can take 15-20 minutes or longer if the issue and discussion warrants and the class or program time allows.

BACKGROUND

The circle and talking piece is an ancient form of communication for spiritual, political and communal life, and is found throughout world traditions. Several Native American tribes in the United States and First Nations tribes in Canada, as well as tribes in Africa use it still. It has been adapted for discussion and decision-making by teachers, social workers, judges, community members, police officers and students. The circle is used around the world when a group of people want to talk about an issue in a way that allows everyone to participate and contribute.

Resources For further information and ideas on using circles in classes or programs for discussion, community building, to teach pro-social skills or to problem solve when harm has been done, check out the following resources:

Positive Discipline in the Classroom by Jane Nelson.
Teaching Students to Get Along by Lee Cantor and Katia Peterson.
Calling the Circle by Christina Baldwin.