

6. Respond to Harm as a Community: Circle Outlines

This circle outline is a part of a larger facilitation guide and community conversations toolkit from On Our Terms. Check out the full toolkit on onourterms.nyc if you want more background and guidance on how to use this tool.

GROUND AND CONNECT

1. Share the following quote from the On Our Terms project:
“I'm thinking about normalizing conflict. The idea that restorative practice is absent of problems in a building is not true, we're humans and conflict does exist. So, thinking differently about what type of conflict is it. Is it physical conflict? Is it emotional conflict? Like just normalizing that it will happen and how are we deciding to deal with it so that everybody feels safe? With the understanding that you WILL be in conflict with others... and work from that understanding that conflict won't be erased, but that there are healthier ways of handling it.”
2. If you had to get rid of one flavor of ice cream, which would you get rid of?

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

1. What are agreements that you want to hold yourself and each other to? When we think of these agreements, we can think not only about agreements for this space, but the kinds of things you would like to see from the world behind you? Below are some starting agreements to kick us off (Note: If you are in a space that meets regularly and has agreements already established, feel free to you use those, and ask each participant to pick one to focus on that they are really strong at supporting the group through, and one they would like to tend to improving).
 - a. One mic, and speak from a place of “I”/our own experience
 - b. Active listening
 - c. Confidentiality, or the stories stay here but the lessons leave
 - d. If you say something that you think might have hurt somebody, say “Oops” and we can pause to address it; If you say something that you have been hurt by, say “Ouch,” and we can pause to address it
 - e. Passing is always an option

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Peer-to-peer circle

1. **EXPLORE.** Why do you think conflict might be an important part of any community? What can we potentially learn from it?
2. **SHARE EXPERIENCES.** In your life, what is something that you have learned through making mistakes? How have those things impacted you?

3. **ENVISION.** If you were to make another mistake, how would you want the people around you, or even yourself, to respond? How would you want to be treated at that moment?

Intergenerational circle

1. **EXPLORE.** What skills or resources exist in your community to understand or respond to conflict? What do they do?
2. **SHARE EXPERIENCES.** Can you remember a time when your community responded to conflict in ways that resulted in positive change or learning? What happened?
3. **ENVISION.** What do you think your community could do to change the way they respond to moments where others create harm or make mistakes? Is there something you want to keep in mind in the future when it might happen?

CLOSING

1. Read the following recommendations around holding harm as a community:
 - a. Create a simple, accessible process for anybody in the school community to request a circle, with designated people and time to respond to those requests.
 - b. Develop clear steps for before, during, and after circles, to support transparency and follow-up. This may include, but is not limited to: sharing facilitation questions with participants before circles (get consent); asking about needs of those involved and map out potential supports (center healing); determining the best suited facilitator and support people (build on relationships); and designating accountability partners and key dates for follow-up on action steps after a circle is complete (seek transformation).
 - c. Discuss privilege, oppression, and other relevant institutional or structural forces in preparing and facilitating restorative circles, considering the ways in which these structural forces and related personal experiences may be important to understanding the specific instance of harm, and for those involved to feel their experiences are being acknowledged and taken seriously.
2. As you listen to these recommendations, write down a way that you can better show up for your community in times of conflict. If time permits, share them out loud and create a list that can continue to grow in the community.