



# THE WAY OF CIRCLE

## LAYER TYPE: COMMUNITY, PRACTICE

A group needs practices for sharing.

This is one that is widely used within the ecovillage movement and therefore a recommendation for each community group to experiment with - and find the form that match the group the best.



### Aims and Objectives



### Time

This method has the aim to:

- create a sharing space for the group.

Between 35 - 95 minutes.



### Materials & Preparation

- Items to put in the circle

Prepare the place so it is inviting for the group to be in, together, sitting in a circle.



### Target audience

Community groups that need each other and therefore also a space for sharing.



### Number of Participants

Minimum 5 - maximum 40.



**Duration**      **Activity**

**5'**    **FRAMING**

**5'**    **CALLING THE SPIRIT**

**20-80'**    **THE CIRCLE**

**5'**    **DEBRIEFING**

## INTRODUCTION

The way of circle is a powerful approach to create a setting where everybody is listened to.

The talking stick is often used in a simplified way, just to show "whose turn it is". But it can be a tool for a much more powerful setting that creates a special atmosphere and gives the space for deep sharing of what really matters to us.

What makes the difference between an ordinary "round" using the talking stick and a real "circle", following the way of circle, is the framing - the verbal framing and the setting that is created.

The participants sit in a circle, with a beautifully created center - a candle, some flowers and/or some symbols that symbolize what is important to the group.

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### INSTRUCTION 1 - FRAMING (5 MINUTES)

Start the session with a moment of silence.  
Ask the participants to concentrate on their body and their breathing. A short story can help to create the spirit that holds the special energy of the circle. Use the one below or another similar.

#### The story of the two wolves

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life.  
"A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Grandfather - which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

### INSTRUCTION 2 - CALLING THE SPIRIT OF THE CIRCLE WAY (5 MINUTES)

The facilitator invites then to share in the "circle way".  
He or she names why the circle was called:  
Is there a specific topic to be talked about? Or is this a meeting "just" for creating a community spirit and sharing what's moving us at this moment?

Then the principles of the Circle Way are presented:

1. Talk from your heart. Only speak if you are really moved by something. Do not react, but speak from your heart.
2. Listen with your heart. Listen with the wish to learn more about the person that is speaking - without judgement, without expectations and without wanting the other to share your opinion.
3. Respect the energy of the Circle and speak the essence - short contributions show this respect.
4. Respect the privacy of the Circle. What has been said in the Circle, remains in the Circle and is not shared outside the Circle.
5. Ask for what you need and give what you can give.



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## INSTRUCTION 3 THE CIRCLE (20 - 80 MINUTES)

Then the talking stick (or any other talking object) is given to the person that sits next to the facilitator.

Only the person who has the stick (or the object) is the one that has the right to talk. All the others listen with open hearts. If the person who has the stick doesn't want to speak, they pass the stick to the next neighbour.

It is okay to stay for a short while with the stick in the hands without speaking and to wait, if there is something that needs to be said or not. With respect for the energy and the time of the group, the stick should then be passed on to the next person.

In the original version, the talking stick usually circles around until nobody has to add anything anymore.

When the talking stick has gone through the whole circle once without anybody adding anything to the circle, the meeting is considered over.

### FACILITATOR TIP:

In many circumstances in communities, it is not possible to have the stick circling until nobody adds anything anymore. A while before the end of the meeting-time approaches, the facilitator should then give the information that the last circle is starting, when the talking object is in his or her hands.

## INSTRUCTION 4 CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Then it's time to formally close the circle, to thank everyone involved and to ask to move the things that have been heard in your heart without gossiping about it somewhere else.

### RELATION TO THE CLIPS MODEL

THE CIRCLE WAY represents a common way of working in and with groups, in the ecovillage movement. It can be used as a community building practice, to resolve conflicts and to enhance the bonding experience in a community, sharing circles as a supplement to more operational meetings.

At the PRACTISE level the Circle Way can be a practice used in different ways, in a community.

