

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT STORY CIRCLES

How do you get people to tell stories rather than offer analysis? For example, should the facilitator go first to model story?

- The facilitator's job is to set the circle up by clearly defining the story circle rules, making sure everyone understands them, and enforcing them (in a good natured manner) once the circle begins.
- A facilitator should not go first to model story, as this will lead to imitation rather than the circle seeking its own group dynamic.
- If a participant offers analysis rather than story, let it pass. The next participant will likely tell a story.

What happens if no one in the circle wants to tell the first story?

- The facilitator should have told participants that periods of silence are not a bad thing, and that the circle will just wait as long as it takes for someone to be moved to tell a story.

Since almost all story circles will have a limited amount of time, should there be a timekeeper with a mechanism, such as a bell, to signal when time is up?

- No. Bells or other such mechanisms are distracting.
- The facilitator should have instructed participants to consider the number of people in the circle, the time limit set for the circle, and pace themselves accordingly so that everyone has the chance to tell a story.

Are there forms other than story for which the Roadside circle method can be effectively used?

- Yes. Song, poetry, and movement circles using the same facilitation guidelines are practical.
- If doing an analysis circle for a defined purpose, the guideline of limited time and building on the previous statement is helpful.

Are observers ever allowed?

- No. Everyone in the room must be part of the circle.

What is the rule of thumb to decide whether or not a circle will be recorded?

- Everyone in the circle must agree that the session will be recorded, and be informed of how the recording will be used.

What if someone arrives after the circle has commenced?

- They may not join the circle. This should be made clear prior to scheduling the circle.

What do I do if people insist on cross-talk (talking out of turn) during the circle?

- The facilitator should tell participants ahead of time what she will do if there is cross-talk – perhaps a good natured warning sound like “Ah, ah, ah.”
- Although it is extremely rare, if someone refuses to wait until their turn, despite being asked to do so, the facilitator should ask the individual to leave the circle.

What if a participant doesn't tell a single story during the entire circle?

- It's unusual, but it's acceptable.