

Facilitation Technique: The Circle

Circles have gathered human beings into respectful conversations for thousands of years. The New Mentality uses it for group meetings and gatherings such as *Disable the Label* to encourage thoughtful speaking and listening.



WHAT IS THE CIRCLE GOOD FOR?

One of the beautiful things about the circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues and timeframes. The circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. The circle can also be used as means for “checking in” and “checking out” or a way of making decisions together, particularly based on consensus. Be creative with the circle and be ready for the wisdom it can unearth!

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE CIRCLE

1. **Leadership rotates** among all circle members.
2. **Responsibility is shared** for the quality of the experience.
3. **Have a higher purpose** that you gather around.

THREE PRACTICES OF THE CIRCLE

1. **Speak with intention:** consider what has relevance to the conversation at the moment.
2. **Listen with intention:** be present and thoughtful about actively listening when other people are speaking.
3. **Tend to the well-being of the group:** be aware of the impact of our contributions.

OPENING A CIRCLE

As an anti-oppressive practice, it is important to honour the land you are on before starting a meeting. Take time to acknowledge the First Nations territory that the meeting is occupying in an announcement to your group. Visit native-land.ca to find the Indigenous territory of your community and/or event.

Once people have gathered, it is helpful for the host or a volunteer participant to begin the circle with a “framing” piece that grounds participants by stating why they are at the meeting or event. This can be done through a speech, moment of silence, poem, or song—whatever invites centering.

At *Disable the Label*, we use this time to welcome participants, introduce the hosting team, talk about what has been happening at TNM this past year, get participants into a “heart space” and encourage people to stretch themselves.

ESTABLISHING THE CENTRE

The centre of a circle is like the hub of a wheel; energies pass through it as it holds the rim together. To help people remember how the hub helps the group, the centre of a circle usually holds objects that represent the intention of the circle. Any symbol that fits this purpose or adds beauty will serve.

At *Disable the Label*, the hosting team and participants are invited to bring items of significance into the centre. Sometimes these items are used as talking pieces.

Facilitation Technique: Right Relations (Brave Space)



The purpose of this activity is for hosts and participants to **create a community agreement** and design the space they want to work in. Right relations are about how we can be in a good relationship to our self, each other and with the land. It is an opportunity for participants and hosts to **state what they need to feel brave** in the space and what they have to offer the group.

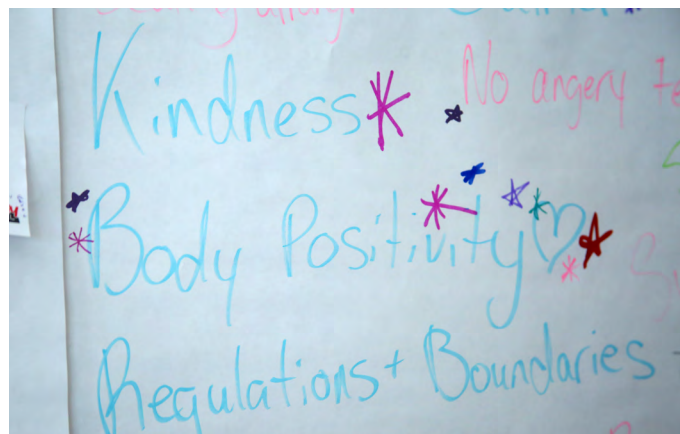
We do this activity in our TNM Groups and at Disable the Label because it gives everyone an opportunity to contribute to the circle and say what their needs are. Doing so creates a **consensus** or set of rules that all participants can benefit from as they co-create guidelines rather than have them prescribed.

MATERIALS

1. Long paper roll or flip chart paper
2. Markers
3. Crayons
4. Coloured pencils
5. Pastels

SET-UP

- **Participants** should be set up in a circle
- **IN** the centre of the circle, place the paper in a square (or, alternatively, on the wall)
- **PLACE** markers, crayons, coloured pencils, and pastels around the paper



STEP ONE: BEGIN BY FRAMING THE ACTIVITY

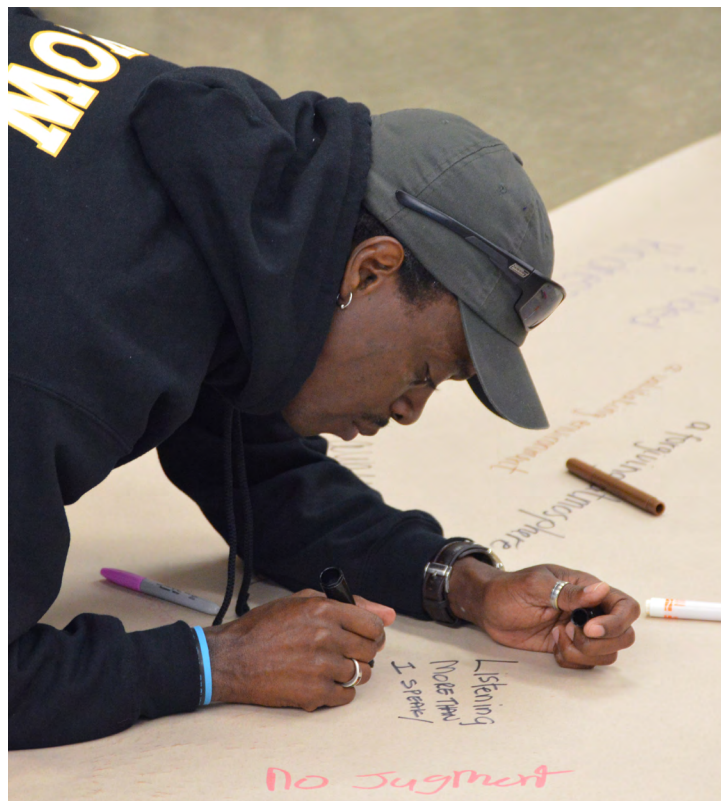
First, frame why the group is doing this activity. Highlight how this activity is intended to help everyone feel as safe and brave as possible within the space. Explain how co-creating a community agreement can achieve this. Give examples of the needs that people might share, including requests for an anti-oppressive space (e.g. using each other's correct pronouns).

STEP TWO: INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PAPER FOR ROUND ONE— NEEDS

Invite participants to enter the circle and write or draw what they need to be brave in the space.

It is important that the circle holds silence throughout this part of the activity so everyone can focus and reflect.

You can dedicate as much time to this as you would like. Sometimes it will take people a few minutes to feel comfortable enough to enter the circle. Once the last person has returned to their seat, hold a few minutes of silence for any participants who still might want to write something.



STEP THREE: INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO READ THE PAPER

Invite participants to walk around the paper and read what everyone has written. Again, it is important that this is done in silence.

STEP FOUR: INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PAPER FOR ROUND TWO—OFFERS

Invite participants to re-enter the circle and write or draw what they can offer the group. Repeat step three and invite participants to read the paper.

Invite participants to walk around the paper and read what everyone has written. Again, it is important that this is done in silence.

STEP FIVE: GROUP DEBRIEF

In popcorn style, ask participants to highlight some common themes that they saw. Allow participants to talk about things that stuck out at them.

Sometimes people will say things like “no judgement”, “support”, or “empathy”. This is a great time to have a conversation with the group and unpack what these terms mean to them.

Facilitation Technique: Open Space Technology

Resource: www.openspaceworld.org
Owen, H. (1997). *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*.
San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

THE PURPOSE

Allows people to set the agenda and call the conversations they need to have.

USEFUL WHEN

Your main goal is providing participants the opportunity to shape the agenda as well as giving them space to have the conversations they need.

The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to set the agenda by people with the power and desire to see it through.

PRINCIPLES OF OPEN SPACE

WHOEVER comes are the right people

WHENEVER it starts is the right time

WHATEVER happens is the only thing that could have

WHEN it ends, it ends

ROLES IN OPEN SPACE

1. **Host:** announce and host a workshop
2. **Participant:** participate in a workshop
3. **Bumble Bee:** “shop” between workshops
4. **Butterfly:** take time out to reflect

WHAT IS OPEN SPACE GOOD FOR?

Open Space can be used in groups of 10 to 1,000, if not more. The outcomes can be dramatic when a group uses its passion and responsibility—and is given the time—to make something happen. To this end, it is important to give enough time and space for several sessions to occur.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Flip chart paper
2. Markers
3. Post it notes

GENERAL FLOW OF OPEN SPACE

1. Set up the room in a circle with a flip chart prepared. On the flip chart, create a table with rows of timed “rounds” and columns of “locations” within the space—as many of each as you like.

	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3
Round 1			
Round 2			

2. Frame the activity by defining the purpose of this Open Space (i.e. inviting participants to delve into topics of their choosing.) Explain the principles, rules and **law of mobility** in Open Space.

The Law of Mobility: If you find yourself in a conversation where you are not contributing or learning, move to one where you can.

3. Invite people to quietly approach the flip chart and sign up to be the “host” of an Open Space conversation. Hosts will write a name for their conversation and say a brief description to the group. Proceed to step 4 when all the spaces in the table are filled or participants are no longer approaching the flip chart after ample time has passed.
4. Participants move to join these conversations within each round. These conversations evolve as participants can move from group to group whenever they feel that they are no longer learning or contributing, or when they feel more interested in another topic.
5. Run the activity until all the rounds are complete.

Facilitation Technique: World Café

Resource: www.theworldcafe.com
Brown, J. & Isaacs, D. (2005). *The World Cafe Book*.
San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler Publishers Inc.

THE PURPOSE

Foster conversation, build relationships, share information and plan for action.

USEFUL WHEN

When you are trying to facilitate dialogue among a medium to large sized group.

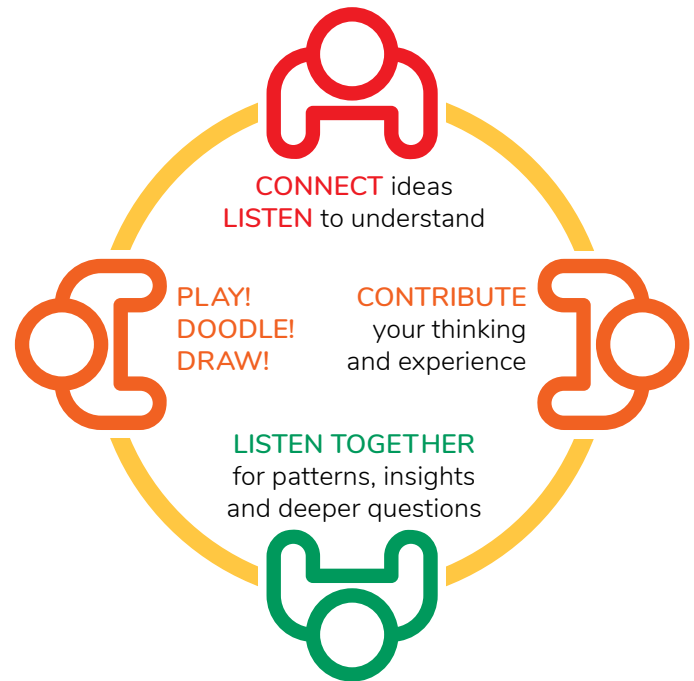
World Café is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective for information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection, exploration and action planning.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES OF WORLD CAFÉ

1. Create hospitable space
2. Explore questions that matter
3. Encourage each person's contribution
4. Connect diverse people and ideas
5. Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
6. Make collective knowledge visible

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Small tables (36-42"), preferably round
2. Chairs for participants and presenters
3. Tablecloths
4. Flip chart paper or paper placemats for covering the tables
5. Markers
6. Flip chart or large paper for harvesting collective knowledge or insights
7. Fidget toys for the table including Play-Doh, pipe-cleaners, stickers, etc.



GENERAL FLOW OF A WORLD CAFÉ

1. Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
2. Set up progressive rounds of conversation—usually of 20 minutes each—with each guided by a deep and thoughtful question.
3. Ask one person to stay at the table as a “host” and invite the other table members to move to other tables as “ambassadors” of ideas and insights.
4. Ask the table host to share key insights, questions and ideas briefly with new table members, then let folks move through the rounds of questions.
5. After you have moved through all the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations. You can do this after each round as well if you choose.

When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for both moving through the rounds of questions and leading a whole-group harvest— they will likely take longer than you think!