

Teacher Name:

Class:



Story of Your Name Circle Lesson Plan

Name of Circle: The Story of Your Name

Purpose of Circle: Identify conditions people can feel safe to be their true self/core self

Materials:

- ☐ Talking piece(s)
- ☐ Chime
- ☐ Centerpiece Items
- ☐ Chart paper to record circle guidelines

Preparation: -Arrange chairs in a circle with no other furniture blocking the way.
-Choose a talking piece for the circle
-Arrange a centerpiece in the middle of the circle

Guidelines Reminder: Explain the characteristics of a Circle as you move through the following activities. Before beginning, explain: (5 minutes)

1. Sitting in a circle -

- All can see each other in an unobstructed way
- All can fully engage with one another
- There is a clear focus on the issue
- There is equal participation in the process for all; everyone is invited to participate; the advisor is the circle keeper.
- The Circle Keeper (today it is the advisor, can also be a student)
 - a. reminds the group of circle norms
 - b. sometimes sets the topic
 - c. can step in if someone is violating the group agreements or not following the circle norms

2. Explain that we will always begin with The Opening Ceremony (10 min)

- Circles provide a space apart from the rest of the school day. They provide a space where students can speak more openly and honestly.
- An opening ceremony marks the start of the Circle process, giving participants a chance to put aside whatever has happened so far that day.
- It is a time for students to center themselves so that they can be more in the moment and mindful
- Openings can be a poem, a piece of music, a few minutes of silent meditation, a story, or a question for reflection

Values reminder: Have the cards of all the values that they made and place them around the centerpiece. Say: The list is one of shared values that are the foundation of good relationships with one another. We will be using them again in our circles and in the future.
***If you have not done this circle yet, leave it out.*

Opening:

Introduce the following poem, by Black Elk, a Native American elder and healer who lived from 1863-1950. Read the poem aloud.

Everything the Power of the World does is done in a Circle.
 The sky is round, and I have heard
 That the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars.
 The wind, in its great power, whirls.
 Birds make their nests in Circles,
 For theirs is the same religion as ours.
 The sun comes forth and goes down in a Circle.
 The moon does the same, and both are round.
 Even the seasons form a great Circle in their changing,
 And always come back again to where they were.
 The life of a person is a Circle from childhood to childhood,
 And so it is in everything where power moves.

Check-In Round:

In his statement, Black Elk shared with us his thoughts about Circles. Introduce the talking piece and explain that the Talking Piece

1. It will be passed around the circle in order from one person to next; we pass it to our left, a Native American tradition (many societies have used circles for communication), because that is the side closest to our heart and we speak from our hearts in circles
2. Whoever is holding is holding the Talking Piece is invited to speak or pass
3. While one person is speaking, the other participants are practicing actively listening

(their turn will come when the talking piece comes around)

4. Everyone has an opportunity to share without interruption

Ask participants to share their name and what comes to mind when they think of a circle. Tell them their response can be short and does not require explanation. We are just naming associations so we can see how many circles, hoops, balls, and cycles we encounter in our daily lives.

Alternatively you might ask participants to think of a circle in their own lives. This might be a physical circle, like a ball, or it might be a cyclical process like the ones Black Elk mentions.

As circle keeper, start the circle by sharing your name and a circle. Sharing yourself in this introductory circle sets a tone and shows participants how the process works.

At the end of the go round, point out the prevalence of circles in our lives, as Black Elk states, Circles have power. In our Circle gatherings over the course of the year, we are sure to experience and explore that power in different ways. Today is just the beginning.

Activity: A Story of My Name

(20 min) Go Around: I'm going to pass the talking piece and ask you to say something about your name. What do you know about your name? The Keeper should go first and model the short time to speak. (less than 2 minutes per person).

Send the talking piece around asking students to share a story about their name. Before doing so, elicit and emphasize the importance of names. Often a name is the first thing we learn about a person. It's an important part of our identity that we use to connect to our communities.

Students can choose to talk about their first name, last name, middle name, or nickname. They can share anything they know about their name: why was it given to them, by whom, whether they were named after someone etc. Do they know the ethnic, religious or cultural roots of their name? How about the meaning of their name? Is their name ever misspelled or mispronounced? How does it make them feel? Do they have a nickname?

If students don't have much information about their name, they can share whether they like or dislike their name and possible reasons why. Is their name unique or do they know three others with the same name?

Round Questions: A time you felt trust

(3 min) Take a few deep breaths and close your eyes if you're comfortable doing so. Think of a time when you felt completely accepted for who you are. Imagine when you were

relaxed where you were mostly yourself and were not judged. Notice who was around you. Try to remember what you see, feel, hear, smell and taste. What did people do?

(5 min) Turn to someone on your left and take a few minutes to share. Try to notice what context, elements, and values were present.

(15 min) Go Around: Pass the talking piece around and ask: What was the most significant experience of that story? What values/actions were important to you at the time? Why were you able to feel completely accepted for who you are?

(Option) What have you learned about yourself and your needs?

(Option) What could you do to create places where you can be most fully yourself?

Check-Out Round:

- After everyone has gone, explain that we always end with a Closing Ceremony (5 min)
 - a. This round serves as a wrap up, preparing students to return to their day.
 - b. Closings may acknowledge the work that participants have done, summarize the lessons learned, and affirm the connection among the Circle participants.
 - c. Send the talking piece around and ask students one thing they learned about someone in their group today or to share their thoughts about the circle. Students can also share one word of how you're feeling right now as the circle comes to a close. The Circle Keeper should go last.

Closing:

"My Name" by Sandra Cisneros excerpted from The House on Mango Street

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother's name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse--which is supposed to be bad luck if you're born female-but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don't like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would've liked to have known her, a wild, horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn't marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That's the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with

what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least- -can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. Would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.

Thank you all for participating in our circle today!!