

The Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law (C-DRUM) advances conflict resolution processes to transform relationships, systems, and the world.

Restorative Approaches Lesson 2: Developing Guideline for Our Circles

Key Takeaways:

Restorative approaches center around collaboration and consensus. These are not always easy or efficient to achieve. Agreements developed by consensus, however, have higher levels of legitimacy and buy-in and, by extension, compliance. By having students express what they need and what they can bring to support each other. Students will also gain experience with self-expression, empathy-building, community-building, and cooperating to develop behavioral standards everyone can abide by.

Participants' Learning Objectives:

Students will develop guidelines for how they will behave and work together in circles.

Materials:

1. Choose an object to serve as a talking piece. The object should fit in students' hands and can be easily passed from person to person. The object should have some meaning to you that you can imbue it with by telling a story or describing its value to you and why it has that value.

Examples:

- a. "This shell is one I picked up from the beach when I went with my family this summer."
 - b. "This book was one of my favorites when I was your age."
2. Two pieces of paper or two paper plates per student.
 3. Thick markers in different colors so every student can choose a color.
 4. Flipchart paper for drafting the guidelines language and writing out the final, approved copy for future reference in circles.
 5. Pull up Lesson 2 PowerPoint on your computer and project it on your classroom screen so everyone can see it.

Procedure:

1. Have your students move their chairs or desks into one large circle so that everyone can see and hear each other when they are seated facing toward the center.
2. Pass around the papers and markers asking each student to take two pieces and one marker of their choice.
3. Bring your chosen object into circle so you can use it as the talking piece and share your story about why the talking piece is meaningful to you.
4. Follow the instructions on the PowerPoint slides as you take your students through the exercise.
5. Once you have completed the lesson, have students return their chairs to the regular configuration for your lesson

Approximate Time: about 20 minutes

Depending on the level of participation, this may take longer than 20 minutes, so keep track of your time. If you need to break this into two lessons, gather everyone's NEEDS and GIFTS papers, keeping them in separate stacks, then have everyone develop their statement or list of behaviors in your next circle time.

Pro Tips:

It will be helpful for you to model an answer so your students have an example as they figure out what NEEDS and GIFTS they bring to circle. If you are met with confused looks or blank stares when you introduce the question, offer some examples that come to mind about what you need to feel comfortable sharing in circle. Some NEEDS might include:

- Respect—I need to know others won't laugh at me or what I say (unless I am trying to be funny)
- Trust—I need to know I can talk openly without having others share what I say outside our circle
- Time—sometimes I need to take a minute to process my answer

Then invite everyone to write on their paper what they need to participate in circles most effectively.

Repeat that example setting for the GIFTS by recognizing what your students need and offering to bring your gift to help create an environment where everyone can participate fully. Some GIFTS might include:

- Respect—I will honor what every person contributes to our circle and will remind others if they forget.
- Preparation—I will have a talking piece and our questions ready before we gather in circle.

- Listening—I will listen to what you say without responding immediately or offering feedback.

Then invite everyone to write on their paper what they need to participate in circles most effectively.

Extend the Learning:

Collaboration is a key skill students will return to throughout their lives. You may want to link this experience to real life by extending your circle time by inviting everyone to share professions or activities that require adults to cooperate to create an outcome or output.

Collaboration and cooperation are different from consensus. (Invite students to find the definition of each word and consider how they are similar and how they differ.) We can cooperate without having to agree on every aspect of our output. Based on consensus, these guidelines require that every student and educators in your class agrees to every element of your guidelines. How does that complicate the process? How does that strengthen the process?

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