







Wisdom Circle Guidelines


To encourage and facilitate the use of circles, **Wisdom Circles** has formulated a set of guidelines that we call the Ten Constants. These constants have been inspired by councils of indigenous peoples, informed by support and dialogue groups, and drawn from our own experience. The Ten Constants create a safe container that allows participants to tap their innate capacity to relate to each other in a context of wisdom and compassion.


The Wisdom Circle Constants


-  **One: Honor the circle as sacred time and space** by doing simple rituals to mark the beginning and end. A ritual creates a shared sensory experience and a demarcation from ordinary life. Light a candle, for example, or take a moment to breathe deeply. Share a brief period of silence or burn some incense or sage. Listen to a selection of evocative music or to a guided meditation. You can be as creative as you want with this.
-  **Two: Create a collective center** by mutually agreeing upon a topic or intention. This might be visioning the future, healing wounds, going within to learn more about ourselves, making decision or planning actions that sustain and enrich life for ourselves and others. A group may choose a focus specific to its needs, or it can allow for topics to surface determined by individual needs. A question is usually a useful way to frame the topic. Make a physical center in the middle of the circle.
-  **Three: Ask to be informed** by our highest human values such as compassion and truth, by the wisdom of those who have gone before us, and by the needs of those yet to be born. You can also invoke mythical or historical figures who symbolize desired values. One person can speak for the group, or each person can do a personal invocation.
-  **Four: Express gratitude** for the blessings and teachings of life. Acknowledge and honor our interdependence with everything in the Web of Life. In silence, or by taking turns, give thanks for those things great and small whose gifts enrich and nourish you.
-  **Five: Create a container for full participation and deep truth-telling.** Allow each person to speak without interruption or cross-talk. Use a talking stick (or any object that has symbolic significance). The object may


be passed around the circle or taken from and returned to the center. Respect a member's right to silence. Keep everything confidential.

 **Six: Listen from the heart** and serve as compassionate witness for other people in the circle. To be an effective witness requires paying attention to what's being said without interpreting, judging, or trying to "fix" or rescue the person speaking. It also means a willingness to discover something about yourself in the stories of other people.

 **Seven: Speak from the heart** and from direct experience. When you are moved to speak, do so thoughtfully and with care. Avoid abstract, conceptual language, and stay in touch as much as possible with your feelings. As this capacity develops, you may be moved to share those feelings and to say difficult things without self-judgment and without blaming others.

 **Eight: Make room for silence to enter** to allow for reflection, for meditation, for feelings to surface and for a sense of the sacred to emerge as the group proceeds.

 **Nine: Empower each member to be a co-facilitator** of the process. If possible, designate a different person to be the circle-maker each time. This person readies the physical setting, initiates the opening and closing rituals and facilitates consensus on a topic. Encourage each other to give voice to feelings of satisfaction or discomfort with the group's process.

 **Ten: Commit to an ongoing relationship** with each person in the circle so as to engender trust and caring among members. Extend that caring to other people, to the Earth and all her creatures by practicing capacities developed within the wisdom circle in daily life.

Source:

<http://www.wisdomcircle.org>