

speaking circles

Conversations for Social Change



Presented by

Kim Holl

Facilitator & Social Artist

HOPE ROCKS

kim@HopeRocks.org

www.HopeRocks.org

*You cannot find solutions
to issues that sleep
in the shadows.*

- unknown

A Recipe for social change.

SpeakingCircles

DIGNITY
RISING



Conversations for Social Change: Moving from Talk to Action

WHAT IS A SPEAKING CIRCLE?

Speaking Circles transform the way people communicate. It is an age-old practice that engages the young and old alike, from all spheres of life, to enter into deep meaningful conversations in an atmosphere of dignity. It can be used to - break barriers, strengthen relationships, foster communication skills, build consensus and find solutions to challenges at work, life or school.

Speaking Circle topics can explore social issues, stimulate

thought on local and global inequities and on dilemmas that involve our youth, our elders and our community. The results can be heightened awareness, a cultivation of interaction and activism, and the development of a global lens. Speaking Circles encourage:

- Active listening
- Creating an ethos of respect & inclusion
- Maintaining impartiality, being non-judgmental
- Open mindedness
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Positive skepticism

As a storyteller, visionary leader, social entrepreneur and compassionate communicator, Kim has devoted much of her life to transformational education and adventure learning. She has facilitated speaking circles and innovative workshops in Canada and the United States that focus on youth advocacy, community engagement and wellness, peace building, restorative practices and using philanthropy to inspire social change.

Kim Holl
Founder & Facilitator
www.HopeRocks.org

VISION: Hope Rocks is dedicated to improving the quality of life for young people and adults, organizations and communities, inspiring them to bring meaning to the places they work, learn and live and to become extraordinary stewards for social change.

Speaking Circles

Moving from Talk to Action

Indigenous cultures from time immemorial, came together and sat in circle. Always at the centre of the circle was a small fire - offering warmth, a repellent for insects and prey and a source to share food. From this instinctive process - finding ones place in the circle, community developed. (unknown)

For the past 11 years, I have been helping schools and communities bring dignity and respect to the places they live, learn and work - facilitating experiential, anti-bullying programs for schools throughout the Pacific Northwest. We began by offering peace building programs to schools. But nobody was 'buying'. Principals told us..."What we really need is an anti-bullying program. So we change the name of our program, while the content stayed the same. What they didn't realize was that, if you are fostering dignity and respect, you will reduce bullying, violence and anti-social behavior. You will also increase dignity, respect, understanding, empathy and unity. So while the 'peace building' business was in low demand, the 'anti-bullying' business was flourishing.

I believe that if we want to create and sustain change - we must examine the lens we use for viewing the world: our values, perceptions, attitudes, judgements. We must get to the root of issues that hold us back, they are not always obvious, they are sometimes hidden. We must be able to enter into courageous conversations with each other in an atmosphere of dignity. We must involve those directly impacted to become part of the process and solution, empowering them and allowing their ideas and wisdom to emerge.

Six years ago, I began using Speaking Circles as a social experiment. It has become the heart of my work.

I have used speaking Circles with young people and adults, to bring communities together, to develop understanding between cultures and cliques, to plan social change initiatives, to problem solve and generate ideas, to reconcile relationships, and most importantly, to break the silence on issues that hide in the shadows.

This was a multi-media presentation. The essence is captured in these slides.

Speaking Circles



- What is it?
- Why does it work?
- How can we use it?
- What are the benefits?
- Courageous conversations?

Speaking Circles

Process Adopted

Conversation Cafe Model

Adaptation: Moving from talk to action

How does it work?

- Gather 6 - 8 people at a round table
- The Agreements & Process Card
- Speaking object
- A timer (*recommended at first*)
- Table topic question in the center of the table.
- Note paper

Agreements

Open-mindedness: listen to and respect all points of view

Acceptance: suspend judgment as best you can.

Curiosity: seek to understand rather than persuade

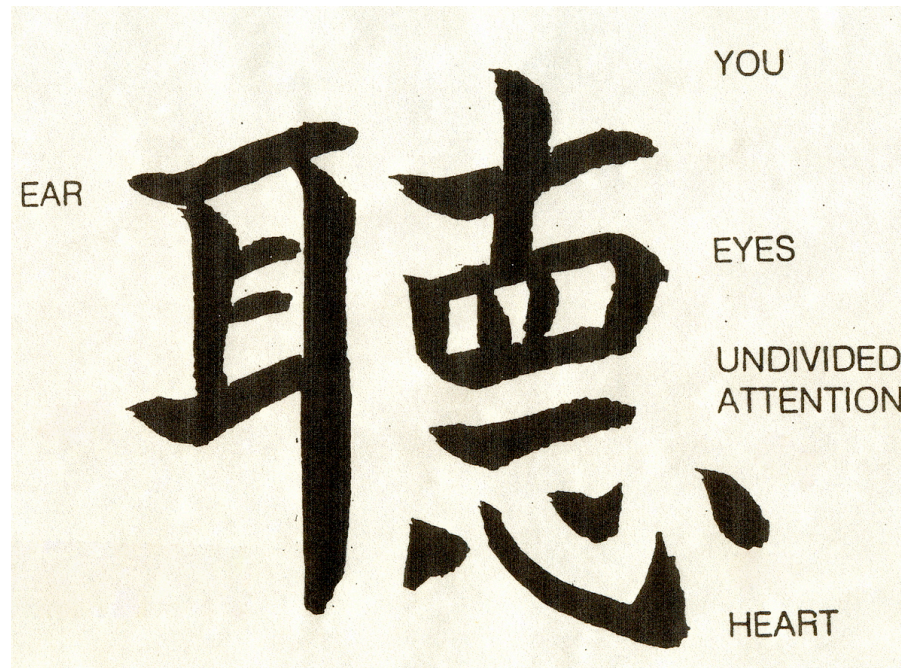
Discovery: question old assumptions, look for new insights

Sincerity: speak for yourself what has personal heart and meaning

Brevity: go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

Adapted with permission from Conversation Cafe'.

Chinese Character for “To Listen”



Process

Round 1: INTRODUCTION

Pass around the talking object; each person speaks briefly to the topic, no feedback or response. (1 min)

Round 2: GOING DEEPER

Again with talking object, each person deepens their own comments or speaks to what has meaning now. (1 min)

Round 3: OPEN DIALOGUE

Open, spirited conversation. Use talking object if there is domination, contention, or lack of focus. (20 - 40 min)

Round 4: FINDING MEANING, TAKING ACTION

With talking object, each person shares briefly what was meaningful to them and what they might be willing to commit to as a result of their conversation. (1 min)

Adapted with permission from Conversation Cafe.

Speaking Circles

Develop Understanding

Plan Projects

Problem Solve

Generate Ideas

Reconcile Relationships

Unearth Silent Issues

Deepen understanding of subject matters

Moving from Talk to Action
A conversation with Vicki Robin

Be Creative....use

Film Clips
Sound Bites
Songs & Lyrics
Poetry
Storytelling

...any medium that can transport the listener
to a place where they are more open to new ideas
and new ways of seeing and being in the world.

Courageous Conversations

Do we have to fight for peace?

Is teaching tolerance good enough?

What should a young adult be reading, seeing or experiencing to become a world changer?

What do you cherish most in life?

What is the role of imagination in creating change?

Are we condoning injustice if we are not moved to action?

Should higher education be free?

What is the most important value to teach?

What are you doing to create community?

Do we value our Elders?

How do you define a good education?

The place you were born defines the life you will live. Do those born into privilege have a responsibility towards those who were not?

What do you cherish most in life?

Should children be given the right to vote?

Is it selfish to think that 'my children deserve better'?

How can we clean up corporate crime?

Who is your hero?

Do you have to be an artist to produce art?

Is there dignity in your workplace?

What can you hold better, a conversation or a remote control?

Outcomes

- Avoid getting stuck in our paradigms
- Inspire the wisdom of the group to emerge
- Adopt a creative lens for viewing the world
- Engage with others, build relationships
- Heighten our capacity to care
- Inspire ordinary people to become extraordinary stewards for social change

Benefits

- Invite open-mindedness
- Improve communication
- Develop empathy & curiosity
- Foster self-esteem
- Enjoy an infusion of energy
- Fun factor engaged!

For more information on Speaking Circles or conversation questions you can use
for success with your group, please feel free to contact me:

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