

# USING CIRCLES EFFECTIVELY

This curriculum was developed by the IIRP Graduate School.  
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International Institute  
for Restorative Practices

# WORLDWIDE INFLUENCE



# LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the day, participants will be able to:

- Describe the key concepts of restorative practices.
- Reflect on how restorative practices may impact participants' professional and personal lives.
- Apply the restorative practices continuum.

# CIRCLES AND COMMUNITY

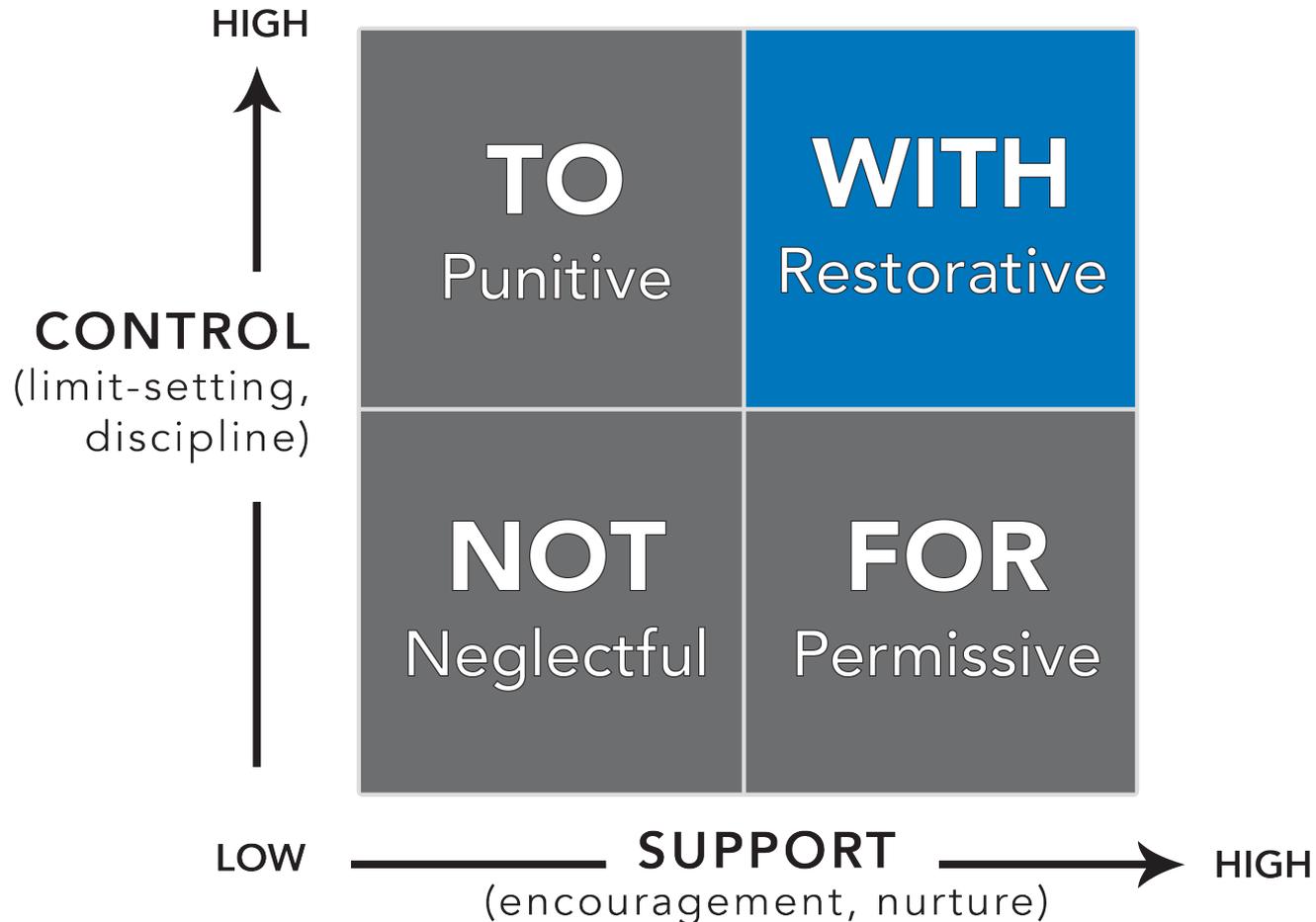
- “There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.”  
(M. Scott Peck, Psychiatrist and Best-Selling Author)
- “Circles create soothing space, where even reticent people can realize that their voice is welcome.”  
(Margaret J. Wheatley)
- “If people stand in a circle long enough, they’ll eventually begin to dance.”  
(George Carlin, Comedian)

# CIRCLES AND COMMUNITY

- The Universe is circles within circles, and everything is one circle, and all the circles are connected to each other. Each family is a circle, and those family circles connect together and make a community, and the community makes its circle where it lives on the Earth. [The community] cares for that part [of the Earth] but cares for it as a circle – which is to say in a cooperative and egalitarian way, where everybody is cared for, and everybody is respected.

(Black Elk)

# SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW



Adapted by Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel from Glaser, 1969

Page 8 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

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# RESTORATIVE PRACTICES CONTINUUM

80% Proactive



20% Responsive



**informal**

**formal**

ffective  
statements

ffective  
questions

small impromptu  
conversations

circle

formal  
conference

Page 12 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# WHY CIRCLES?

- Equality
- Equity
- Safety and trust
- Responsibility
- Reminds you to facilitate
- Builds connections
- Ownership

Pages 22-23 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# TYPES OF CIRCLES

- Proactive
- Responsive
- Sequential
- Non-sequential
- Fishbowl

# PROACTIVE CIRCLES

- Should account for 80% of the circles that are done within a setting.
- Are intentional and can allow for participants to take risks as the community strengthens.
- Build trust and social capital.
- Proactive circles include but are not limited to: creating norms, community building, course content, and games.

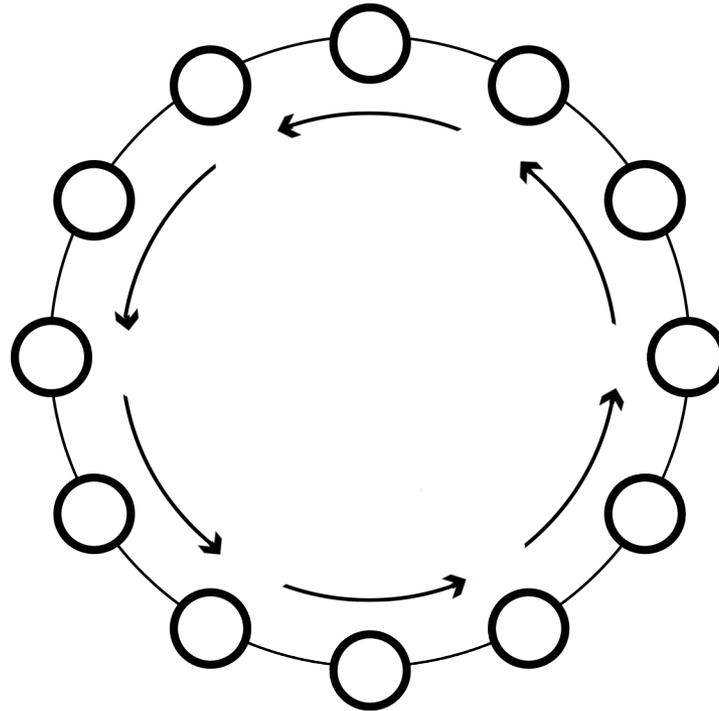
Chapter 3 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# RESPONSIVE CIRCLES

- Should account for 20% of the circles that are done within a setting.
- Are intentional and address conflict and manage tension in a community.
- Involve all who are impacted by conflict and tension.
- Allow a safe place for people to discuss issues as they arise.
- Responsive circles include but are not limited to: patterns of behavior, interpersonal issues, grief, and loss.

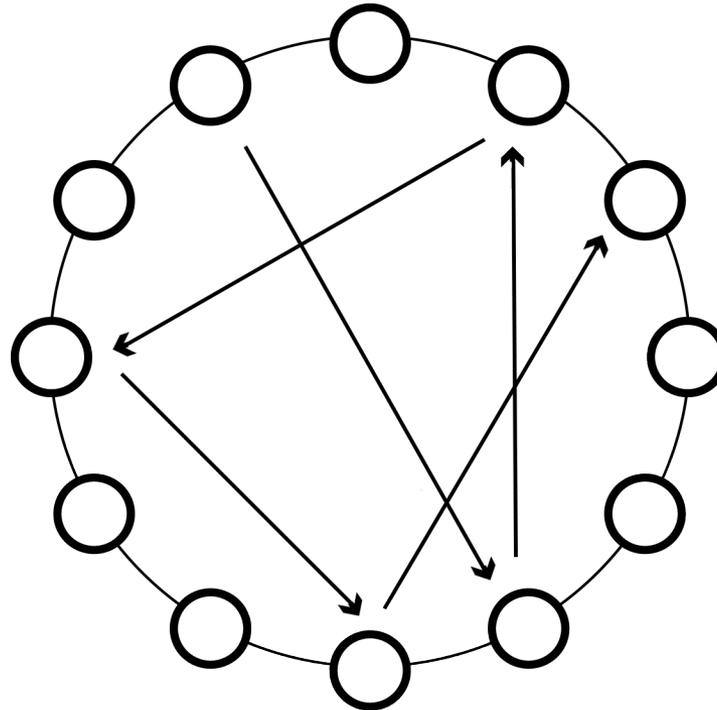
Chapter 4 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# SEQUENTIAL GO AROUND



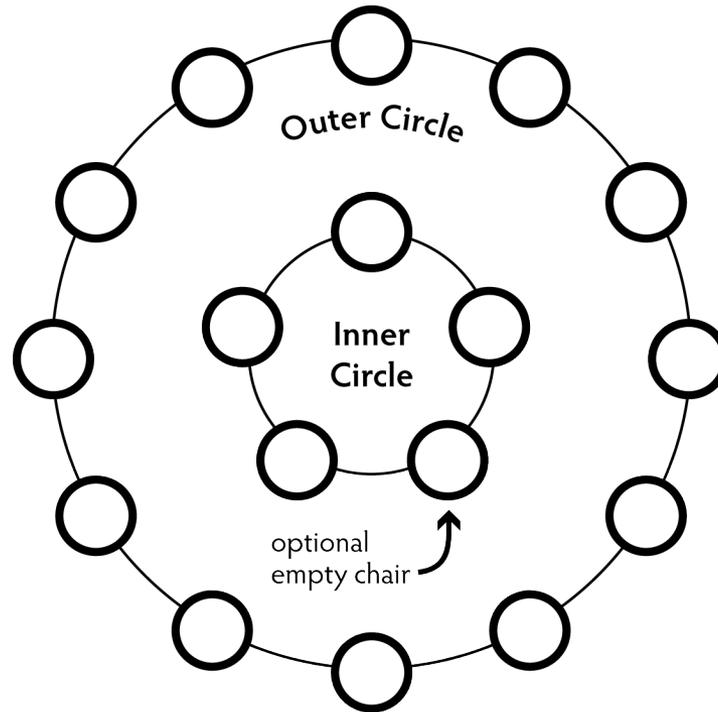
Pages 29-31 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# NON-SEQUENTIAL CIRCLES



Pages 32-33 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# FISHBOWL



Pages 33-36 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT CIRCLES

- Done as a go-around
- Tool to foster accountability
- Related to
  - Course content
  - Interpersonal
- Agreements and acknowledgments
- Goals and achievements

Pages 37-40 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# SECRETS TO SUCCESS

- Clear topic and goal
- Set a positive tone
- Keep the focus
- Get some allies
- Use silence
- Active listening
- Pay attention to body language

# INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT

- Explain reasoning
- Be upbeat
- Regard resistance as fear

# CIRCLE LESSON PLANNING

- Facilitator will run an opening sequential go around to connect the group.
- Facilitator will guide the group in choosing 2-3 situations.
- After the situations are chosen, the group will have a non-sequential discussion and complete the template:
  - Circle Topic
  - Type of Circle
  - Goal of Circle
  - Circle Questions
- Build the questions using the affective question format of past, present, and future.
- Facilitator guides the discussion.

*This is not a role play. It is a practical experience to help you create a product (lesson plan) that can be utilized in your workplace.*

# TOPIC: CREATING NORMS

- Type of Circle: **Proactive (sequential or non-sequential)**
- Purpose/Goal of Circle: To ensure all community members have a voice in the creation of norms.
- Circle Questions:
  - Think about a positive working/learning environment and describe it in a few words.
  - What will contribute to a healthy and productive learning/working environment?
  - What norms can we agree to that will contribute to a healthy and productive learning/working environment? (List the norms.)
  - How will we share these norms with others who join the group?
  - Share one thing you will do to contribute to maintaining the norms.

# TOPIC: RESPECT

- Type of Circle: **Proactive (sequential or non-sequential)**
- Purpose/Goal of Circle: To create an understanding of the word “respect” and what respect will look like in this community.
- Circle Questions:
  - Think of a time when you felt respected.  
Think of one or two words to describe that experience.
  - Think of a time when you felt disrespected.  
Think of one or two words to describe that experience.
  - How would you define respect? What does it look like and sound like?  
(Record answers.)
  - How would you like to be shown respect?
  - How can you show respect to your classmates and teacher in this class?

# RITUALS

- Define “Ritual.”
- What is a ritual you have with family and friends?
- What is the importance of ritual?
- What does ritual provide?
- How can you create rituals in your settings using circles?

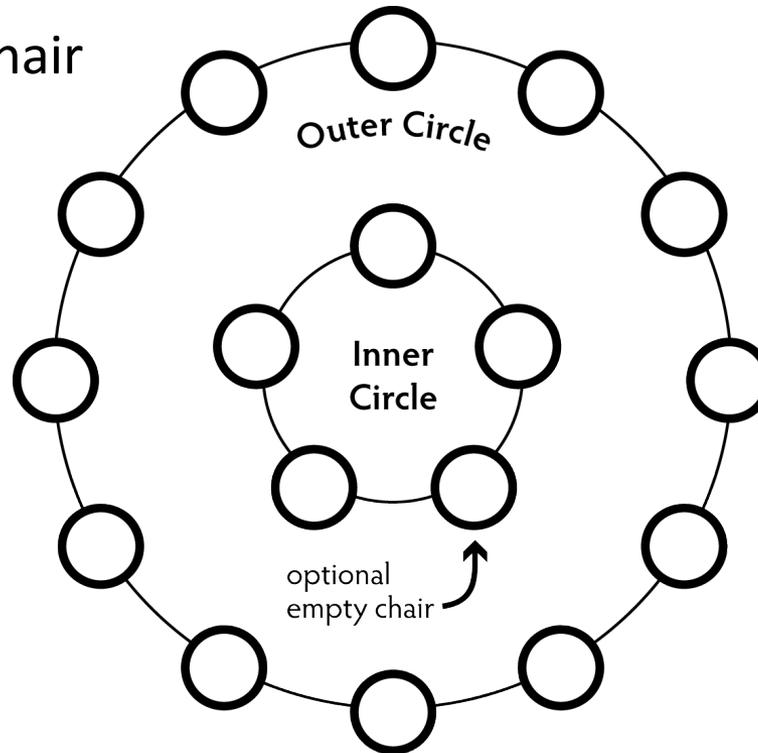
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# SETTING UP A FISHBOWL

- Can be used with sequential or non-sequential circles
- Optional empty chair
- Feedback



Pages 33-36 in *Restorative Circles in Schools* book

# RESTORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

## Demonstrated as a fishbowl

- Volunteer to share a work-related problem.
- 3 uninterrupted minutes to describe the problem and let the group know the need.
- Group has 10 minutes to give feedback; the volunteer does not interrupt, just listens and takes notes.
- Volunteer has 2 minutes to reflect on what they heard and let the group know one or two things they are going to try.

# REFERENCES

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