



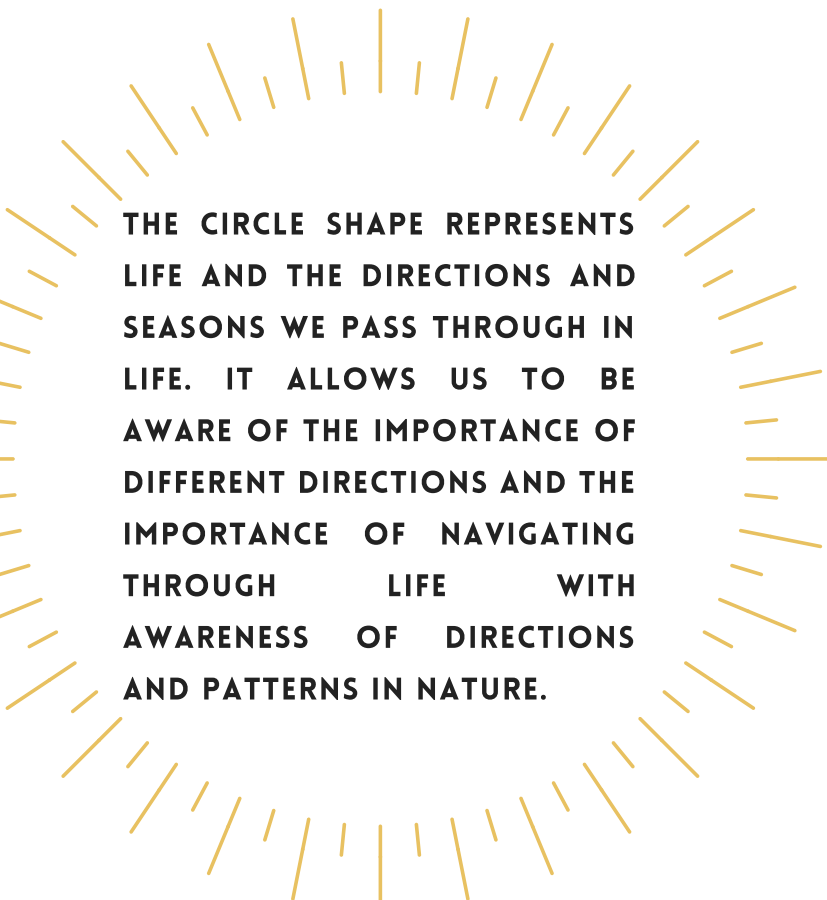
THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

The Circle of Life, Resource Hub as of April 2020



THE CIRCLE OF LIFE



THE CIRCLE SHAPE REPRESENTS LIFE AND THE DIRECTIONS AND SEASONS WE PASS THROUGH IN LIFE. IT ALLOWS US TO BE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE WITH AWARENESS OF DIRECTIONS AND PATTERNS IN NATURE.



It is a tool that can be used:

- to reflect on life
- to see life as a whole
- to project into the future
- to promote self-awareness and mindfulness



THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

As the facilitator, you will be opening and holding the space for sharing. It is your job to make sure that the space is welcoming and safe. Below are some guidelines:

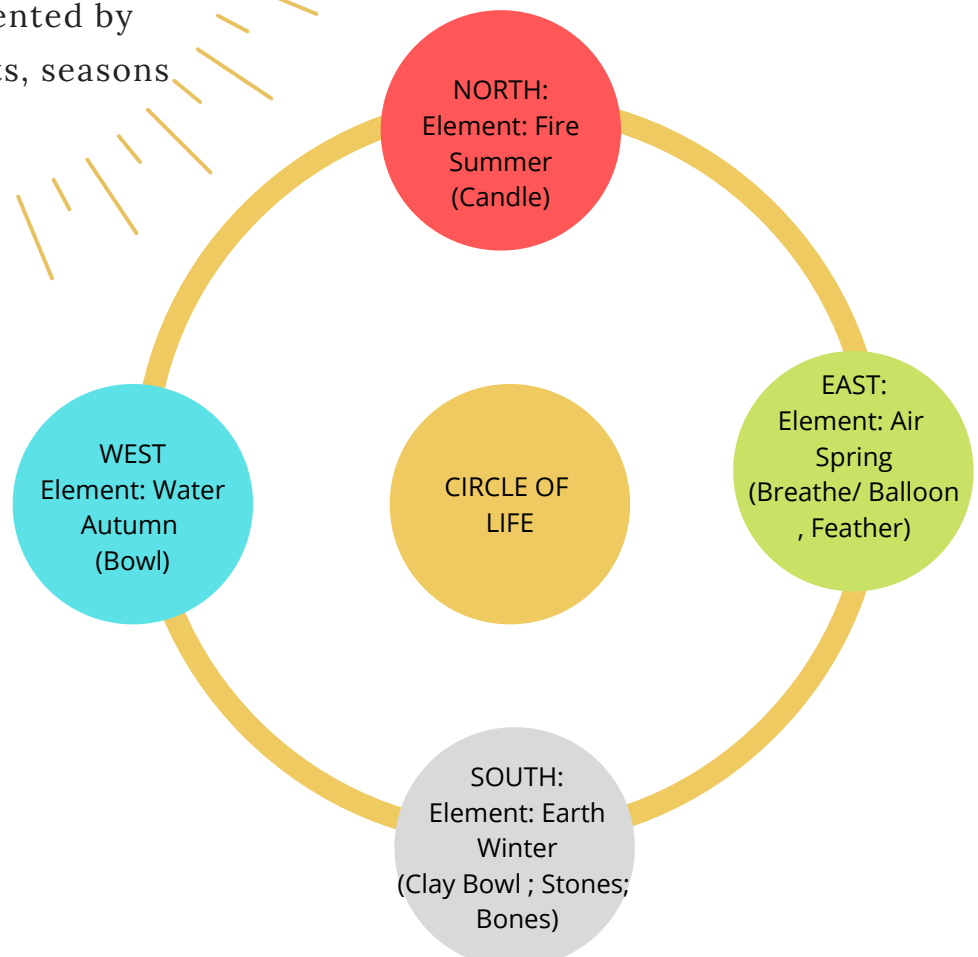
- Opens and closes the process
- Listens actively and compassionately and encourages the same for all participants
- Holds the space which is sacred and is based on intentional healing and compassionate listening
- Encourages sharing and participation by asking key questions at set times
- Encourages mind-body reflection by asking questions such as
 - “What did your childhood sound like?”
 - “What did you look like?”
 - “How did you feel?”
 - “What were your favourite tastes?”
 - “What were your favourite smells?”

- Reaffirm the participants by saying things like
 - “Your feelings are welcome”
 - “Take your time”
 - “It’s okay to cry”
- Ensure that through the process, the participants are able to experience in relief in their sharing provide a follow-up with the participants should they need further care and support
- Remind the group not to enquire about stories shared and not to share other people’s stories
- Observes the group comfort levels and the need for breaks
- The facilitator is comfortable to hold the silence Not to force a participant to share



SETTING UP FOR THE CIRCLE OF LIFE PROCESS

- Chairs are to be placed in a circle
- At the centre of the circle, a rope is placed in the middle to represent the globe
- The different directions are marked: EAST; NORTH; WEST; SOUTH and is represented by the following elements, seasons and symbols/props:



PREPARING THE PARTICIPANTS

Start off the process by doing a few fun, interactive teambuilding and trust exercises. Give participants the chance to learn each others' names. Then, you may allow them to enter the circle. Let each participant choose their seat and get comfortable.

1) Begin with an opening question such as

Why do we share?

What happens when we share?

How do we feel when we share?

How do we feel when we listen?

2) Make the following key points if they have not been raised already:

There is healing, release and relief in sharing.

There is healing in deep, compassionate listening i.e. listening for the sole purpose of decreasing the other person's pain and suffering

3) Ice-breaker

Exercise: Choose a year between 2005 and 2020 and ask participants to share something that took place in that year (an event, a memory, an achievement, the birth or death of someone important). Remember to keep this exercise light as it is just an ice-breaker.

4) Ask if anyone has ever participated in the Circle of Life process before and to describe what the process was like for them.



INTRODUCE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Examples of this are:

- Confidentiality
- Intentional healing
- Noble silence
- The speaker will begin with “I’m in” and once they have concluded, will say “I’m out”.

You may also choose any item to be “the talking piece” which is held by the person who is sharing and placed on the ground/passed on when the sharing is finished.

- Acknowledgement by the rest of the group (finger clicking, saying “thank you”, nodding, “Mmmm” etc.)
- Respect and acknowledgement of any emotion that arises
- The role of the facilitator is to support, guide and hold the process, including being mindful of time and sensitive participation.

INTRODUCE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE PROCESS

Explain the 4 directions, it’s symbols and seasons. Explain the “transitional directions” that are in between i.e. North East; North West; South West; South East.

The Circle starts with birth and the entry into the family unit (it can taken on any form – biological, adopted, foster arrangements, extended family, grandparents etc.). The journey continues with each stage of life as infant, adolescent, adult and elder. Development takes place **spiritually, mentally, physically** and **emotionally** throughout he life journey.

ASK if there are any questions.

OPEN UP THE CIRCLE – inhale and enjoy the process.



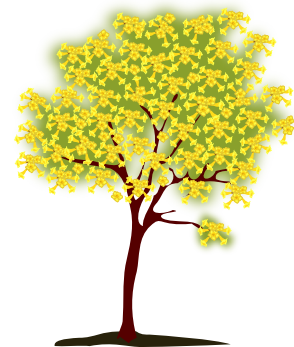
EAST

Represented by spring, birth, breathe, air (balloon or feather), infancy, childhood and the colour GREEN.

Childhood is a time of life that many adults wish to revisit. It is a time filled with laughter, dreams, hope and enjoying the little pleasures of life. It is also a crucial time in an individual's life that has a strong impact on who we become as adults.

Invite a few moments of silence, deep breathing to evoke sharing.

- I invite you to share something from your childhood...
- Did you play? What did you play?
- Can you share the game?
- Who did you play with?
- Who did you play with?
- How did you feel?
- What did you sing?
- Share the song?
- What role did others play in your childhood – other children, your parents, elders, siblings?
- How it feel to be dependent or cared for by adults?



To transition into the next direction you may want to suggest playing a childhood game together or singing a song together. Before transitioning to the next direction, acknowledge all childhood experiences.

NORTH

NORTH Represented by fire (candle) and the adolescence or teenage years as well as the colour RED.

The teenage or adolescent years is often a period of unknown and often surprising changes; bodily changes (physical, hormonal); understanding of identity; personality changes; interests; sometimes a lack of understanding of the changes.

This can also be a period where adolescents are in conflict with adults. This is sometimes a period of great vulnerability where a range of emotional needs need to be met. It is a period where there is a need to fit in and form part of a group. It is also a time of sexual awakening, where our sexual expression is awakened.

Invite a few moments of silence, deep breathing to evoke sharing.

I invite you to share something from your teenage years...

- What makes you think that the teenage years are represented by fire, the colour red?
- How have you experienced your teenage years?
- Where did you live?
- Any key moments you wish to share?
- Reference back to the childhood phase?
- What is it that teenagers do?
- How do you have fun, how do you relax?
- What did you body feel like?
- What did it look like?
- How did you feel about the changes in your body?
- What relationship do you have with others, with children, with adults and elders?
- How did you experience love?



Transitioning exercise: paired hand massage

Facilitator acknowledges all contributions on this direction.

WEST

Represented by water (bowl of water) and adulthood as water tames the fire. The colour is **BLUE**

Adulthood is a period marked by stability, settling down, self awareness and understanding. Maturity brings the awareness of feelings and the confidence to express emotion. Life experience gives adults a broad perspective to better understand the world and the journey everyone walks. Adulthood usually provides the gift of recognizing what is important and the skill to provide what is necessary to live well and to be happy and healthy. This knowledge usually enables adults to make good parents.

Invite a few moments of silence, deep breathing to evoke sharing.

I invite you to share something about your experience with adults or as a young adult...

- What role do adults place in your life?
- What is your experience like as a young adult?
- Adults tame the teenagers/adolescents/fire. Do you know of anyone that plays the role of water in your life? Particularly those who still feel they are in the fire stage.
- Share your experience? Key moments in your life? Is there anyone who plays the water role in your life?
- Are you missing a water role or parent role in your life? How does this make you feel? How do you feel about that?
- Do you perhaps play the water role in anyone else's life? How do you experience this role?
- Do you have a child/children? How do you experience your role as a parent?
- Do you play a care role for any elder or parents in your life as a young adult? How do you feel about this?

Acknowledge all contributions on this direction.



SOUTH

Represented by earth (stone, clay, ashes, sand, bones) and elderhood – a grandparent or passing, preparing to end the Circle of Life in the known form. The colour is WHITE/GREY.

From adulthood, sometimes the grandparent plays the role of the parent. Often the fire is tamed by the grandparent, the throwing of earth onto fire for taming. Usually a big response from the group is being raised by grandparents. This direction is associated with wisdom and experience gained from years of living. There is often a reliance of children or those who are younger to care for them. In the context of the Circle of Life, we acknowledge that life does not end. The soul continues and the legacy of all beings will always remain through their descendants, their stories, memories, love and support.

Invite a few moments of silence, deep breathing to evoke sharing.

I invite you to share something about your experience with elders or grandparents in your life...

- How do you experience the earth element in your life?
- What role do elders or grandparents play in your life?
- How do you feel about this? Have you gained any wisdom from any elders in your life?
- How do you feel about the passing of elderly loved ones due to age? Or about losing loved ones in the future?
- How have you remained connected to those who passed on?
- How would you remain connected?
- What is your responsibility to those who passed on?
- How will you support their legacy?

CONCLUDE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

Sing a song, do a thanksgiving for the sharing, do expressions of compassion, love, trust and confidentiality.

Affirm that the Circle of Life allows us to see a natural sequence in life, generation after generation.

Remind the group of the Collective Agreements.

Close the space.

