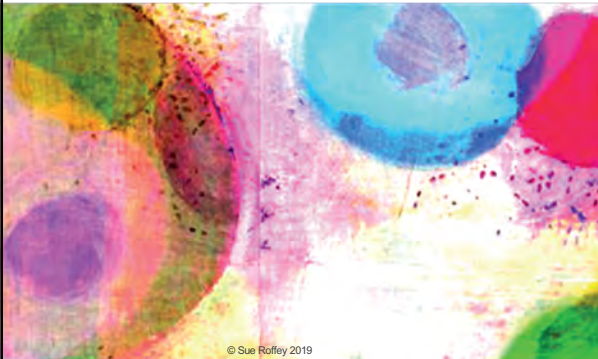

 **CIRCLES GROW SOLUTIONARIES**  
KIDS WITH ANSWERS TO THINGS THAT MATTER



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 **WHAT STUDENTS NEED IN SCHOOL FOR WELLBEING**  
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL SCOPING STUDY ON APPROACHES TO STUDENT WELLBEING


- Physical and emotional safety
- Fostering a sense of meaning and purpose
- **Developing pro-social values**
- **Building a supportive, respectful and inclusive school community**
- Encouraging a healthy life-style
- Using strengths based approaches
- **Enhancing social and emotional learning**

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 **THE PROMISE OF SEL FOR SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING?**

- It connects us to others in positive ways
- It fosters resilience in the face of adversity
- It promotes critical thinking and ethical decision-making
- It promotes authentic pro-social behaviours
- It enables us to achieve individual and community goals by developing social capital
- It gives us a sense of 'shared humanity'
- It promotes good citizenship and civil societies -
- It intervenes in negative spirals.


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 **DURLAK ET AL 2011**

- Meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal (SEL) programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students.
- Significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement


○ Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D. & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.

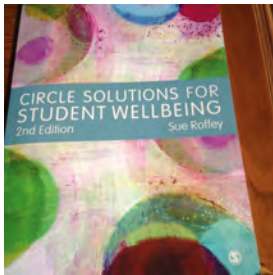
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 **BUT...**

- There is a risk that:
  - social and emotional learning (SEL) programs are about individual skills and do not promote connection
  - the content is not congruent with the context
  - There is no cultural sensitivity
  - there is no clear pedagogy that enables everyone to feel safe
  - Students are told what to think and do rather than coming to their own conclusions about what matters and why
- For maximum effectiveness SEL needs to be part of and underpin whole child/ school wellbeing, positive relationships and high social capital.

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 **CIRCLES GROW SOLUTIONARIES**



- More than anything SEL needs a safe and effective pedagogy.
- Circle Solutions is a framework for interaction, not a programme
- You put in your own content
- There are, however, a set of 12 dimensions to structure input and many resources for doing this
- The ASPIRE principles and pedagogy are what makes this different from any other social and emotional learning intervention
- Research says it works if...!

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## THE ASPIRE PRINCIPLES

- AGENCY
- SAFETY
- POSITIVITY
- INCLUSION
- RESPECT
- EQUITY

Although given separately  
these are all interactive

**You aspire to  
great things?  
Begin with little  
ones.**  
- Augustine Saint


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## ALL CIRCLES BEGIN WITH THE GUIDELINES

- When you are speaking what you have to say is important so we will listen to you. Please listen to everyone else
- You do not have to say anything – you may pass
- There are no put-downs


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## CIRCLES BEGIN WITH A GREETING

- Mexican wave
- Mexican wave with name
- Rationale:
  - You learn better when you are physically active.
  - Your name is important
  - Shows that everyone can participate in quite a short time!


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## MIX UP ACTIVITY

- Stand up and change places if:
  - You came here in a car
  - You came with someone else
  - You have had a conversation today with someone you didn't know
- Rationale: People are being mixed up so they are not in their usual social circle. This promotes a sense of connectedness
- It is a safe activity.


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## A IS FOR AGENCY

- Ryan and Deci talk about the importance of self-determination to wellbeing
- This means having a say in what happens to you
- Not feeling that you are a victim of fate
- You do not blame others but feel empowered to act
- Not feeling controlled but making your own decisions
- When you have agency you take responsibility for your own behaviour and its outcomes
- **This means not controlling others**

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## AGENCY IN CIRCLES

- Everything is voluntary
- Activities give students opportunities to discuss and reflect on important issues in their lives – not being told what to think or do
- Socratic not didactic education - asking questions, not giving answers
- Maximising student responsibility
- Teachers being in charge of situations but not controlling pupils.
- Circles are about changing behaviour from the inside out – not the outside in

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**AGENCY IN ACTION  
THE ABORIGINAL GIRLS CIRCLE**



- Deciding on the ground rules
- Games and creative activities to identify community strengths
- Discussions on what they want their future to look like
- Identifying issues
- Voting for what they want to do
- Taking action
- Community projects

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**AGENCY IN YOUR SCHOOL CONTEXT?**

- With a partner discuss
- one reason why it makes sense to give children more of a voice
- one thing you could do to develop shared decision making


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**MIX UP GAME**

- Happy, Sad, Excited, Scared

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**WHOLE CLASS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE**



- My name is Lily
- I have been in this class for three weeks.
- No-one is unkind to me, but no-one speaks to me much either
- I am on my own a lot and not sure what to do.

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**DISCUSSION AND ACTION IN GROUPS OF FOUR**


- Question 1:
  - What would you be feeling if you were Lily?
- Question 2:
  - What would you want to happen if you were Lily?
- Question 3:
  - What could this group do to help Lily out.
- ACTION.
  - In your groups decide on one sentence that you could say to Lily and one of you comes and says this to her.

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**SAFETY**

- Physical, Psychological, Emotional
- Being accepted for who you are
- Being able to take risks and make mistakes
- Being able to trust others
- Not being singled out
- Feeling someone has your back

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## SAFETY IN CIRCLES

- The right to pass
- No put downs, only personal positives
- Everything happens in pairs, small groups or the whole Circle.
- Activities focus on issues, never incidents
- The use of the third person.

Many books have great ideas for activities but most need changing to a paired or group focus and away from 'I'.


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## SAFETY IN ACTION

- Circle Silent Statements
- Stand up and change places if:
  - *You want to feel safe when you come to school*
  - *Words can hurt people*
  - *Being left out can hurt*
  - *It feels good to be kind to someone*
  - *In this class we look out for each other*
- 


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## SAFETY IN ACTION

- Thinking about what trust means.
- Pair share:
- We know we can trust someone when...


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## POSITIVITY

- Solution focus not problem focus
- Gratitude and thankfulness
- Kindness
- Strengths based language
- Acknowledgement
- Laughter and playfulness
- 

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## POSITIVITY IN CIRCLES

- Promotes positive feelings, being valued, included, respected.
- Activities that encourage playfulness and laughter – these raise oxytocin levels which foster resilience, warmth and cooperation
- Address issues from a solution focused approach, not a problem-based one. What do we want rather than what we want to get rid of. Friendship, inclusion and upstanding than than bullying.
- Identification of strengths for self and others.

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## PLAY IS ESSENTIAL FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

- In the last 50 years there has been a significant erosion of opportunities for free play
- Peter Gray on the decline of unstructured play and the emotional and social implications for children : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg-GEzM7iTk> - 16 minutes
- Children need free play to develop:
  - empathy and relationship skills, imagination and creativity, research and problem-solving skills, ascertaining risk and making good judgments.


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 POSITIVITY IN ACTION

- The Beautiful Blessings
- Mrs Mumbleby
- Post it Pride
- Identifying strengths in self and others




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 INCLUSION


- Feeling you belong, you are accepted and you matter is one of the strongest factors for wellbeing
- Resilience research
- Behaviour research
- Prevention of violence research

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 INCLUSION IN CIRCLES


- The expectation is that everyone will work with everyone else
- Students are regularly mixed up so over time interact with all their peers
- There is a clear directive about what happens when students muck up to give them maximum choice and inclusion whilst maintaining high expectations for behaviour
- Many games / activities promote a sense of belonging
- Circles promote the responsibility of everyone to include others.

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 INCLUSION / EXCLUSION GAME


- Mill about in the centre of the Circle.
- When the facilitator calls out a number get into groups with this number of people in them
- Do this several times
- Questions for participants
  - How does it feel to be looking for a group to belong to?
  - How does it feel to find a group?
  - How does it feel to be left out?
  - What does this mean for our class?

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 RESPECT


- Respecting voices, choices and culture
- Not imposing
- Being accepting and non-judgmental
- Listening
- Being reliable
- Taking account of someone's situation
- Self-respect does not lie in compliance – it lies in integrity, acting in accordance with your values

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 RESPECT IN CIRCLES

- When one person is speaking others will listen
- We share the space fairly
- There are no put downs, either verbal or non-verbal
- We avoid pre-judging anyone on the basis of their colour, race, ability, religion, gender or sexual orientation.


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## THE WARM WIND BLOWS

- There is one less chair than participants
- One person in the middle thinks of something that applies to them and also to some others but not everyone. They say:
- The warm wind blows for everyone who....
- Those to whom this applies stand up and change places. There will be someone without a chair – they choose the next category
- No-one can have more than one turn.


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## DEFINING RESPECT

- Pick up a card that for you represents something about respect.
- Talk to your partner about why you picked this up.
- We will share just one word or phrase as we go round the Circle
- OR: If respect walked into your school one morning what differences would you notice?


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## EQUALITY

- The worldwide evidence (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010, Huppert and So,) is that the more equality there is in a society the more wellbeing there is for everyone.
- Over four decades Denmark has been rated as one of the happiest countries in the world – and has the least difference between the haves and have-nots.
- But equality does NOT mean treating everyone exactly the same = it means thinking through how everyone can have an equal voice and an equal chance.


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## EQUITY IN CIRCLES

- Everyone is at the same level – this is not the time to stand and deliver!
- The facilitator joins in with all activities
- No individual is singled out
- There are flexible / supportive arrangements for those with difficulties in language/learning
- Participation does not depend on academic ability
- Everyone looks out for everyone else


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## EQUITY IN YOUR SCHOOL CONTEXT?

- Using Strengths in Circles cards: To what extent does this happen?
- What is one thing that is happening and one thing you could do?
  - We stand up for what is fair
  - We each have a voice
  - We all have rights and responsibilities
  - We are strong together
  - We are equals
  - We share what we have
  - We can all participate.


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## CLOSING ACTIVITY

- Reflection
- Think about the range of emotions you have experienced today
- Identify anything you learnt that surprised you
- Determine something you might do differently – or more of
- Breathe deeply and evenly and say these affirmations to yourself:
- *Who I am matters more than what I am.*
- *I am someone who changes the world for the better, one word at a time.*


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### THREE RESEARCH STUDIES

- McCarthy F. & Roffey, S. (2013) Circle Solutions, a philosophy and pedagogy for learning positive relationships: What promotes and inhibits sustainable outcomes? *International Journal of Emotional Education* 5 (1) 36-55
- Dobia, B. & Roffey, S. (2017) Respect for culture: Social and emotional learning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in R.Collie, E. Freydenberg, and A. Martin, (eds) *Social and Emotional Learning in Australia and the Asia Pacific*. Springer
- Dobia, B., Parada, R., Roffey, S & Smith, M (2019 – in press) Social and emotional learning: From individual skills to group Cohesion *Educational and Child Psychology* 36(2)
- Roffey, S. (2017) The ASPIRE principles and pedagogy for the implementation of social and emotional learning and the development of whole school wellbeing. *International Journal of Emotional Education* Volume 9, Number 2, November 2017 54 -70


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### QUOTES:

- *"You can go to AGC sad and you'll leave it like really happy"*
- *"You feel like you're a part of something; and like we all respect each other and respect others', like, ideas and stuff"*
- Both the above are secondary students
- *"I've learnt that if I try to listen to other people maybe I will understand more"*
- *"I have learnt to be more confident with myself and not to put myself down"*
- *You think about when you've done bad things and you want to make up for it.*


These are primary schools students  
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### MORE QUOTES FROM RESEARCH

- *"Children have given me the insight not to take things for granted, not to expect children to just deal with issues, because they don't know how."* (student teacher)
- *It was remarkable to see the children I had been working with since March working together as a team and creating friendships and bonds ... no longer were they being disruptive and not talking to one another.* (student teacher)
- *I found that the whole positive rephrasing, not using 'put-downs', has rolled over into every day.* (teacher)

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### CIRCLE SOLUTIONS AND ASPIRE

- The Intro training is one day and is for anyone who wants to run Circles themselves
- The trainer program is two further days and accredits participants to train others & embed Circles as a tool for wellbeing
- Check out: [www.growinggreatschoolsworldwide.com/csn](http://www.growinggreatschoolsworldwide.com/csn)
- Circle Solutions for Student Wellbeing is published by Sage. Third edition out next year
- The Strengths in Circles cards are available from [www.incentiveplus.co.uk](http://www.incentiveplus.co.uk)

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