

Circle Solutions - One Page Summary

A philosophy and pedagogy for positive relationship building

Students love it and it works!

Circle Solutions is a philosophy for developing healthy relationships and a pedagogy for teaching and learning them.

Circle sessions take place in a framework based on:

- **Agency** - we make our own decisions about things that concern us
- **Safety** - we have choices about what we say and do
- **Positivity** - we focus on strengths, solutions and having fun
- **Inclusion** - we work with everyone, no-one is left out
- **Respect** - we listen to each other and there are no put-downs
- **Equity** - we all have an equal voice

Rather than focusing on problems or incidents CS emphasises strengths and solutions. Circles aim to develop social and emotional understanding, skills and wellbeing and can be used in many different ways and for all ages from young children to adult.

Although Circle sessions take place at a specific time the philosophy aims to underpin all relationships in the group. When facilitated appropriately Circles enable the development of an appropriate emotional and social environment for learning, and promote both student and teacher wellbeing.

Circles are aimed at developing:

- self awareness, knowledge and skills
- knowledge and understanding of others
- a sense of belonging and connectedness
- resilience, increased emotional resources and well being
- collaborative, ethical decision making and conflict resolution
- pro-social behaviour

Students and teachers both take part in a wide range of paired, small group and whole class activities, many presented as games. Participants are mixed up so everyone interacts with everyone else. There are many resources available.

The aims are for participants to think reflectively and creatively, talk together about important issues, grow to have understanding about themselves and others, and over time to develop skills they can put into practice. If Circles are too didactic they are not so effective in the long run. They are also intended to be fun.

Circles need to happen regularly to have an impact. The minimum is one session a week although some schools offer a short daily session. Length depends on the age of the students but averages between 20 and 40 minutes.

Circles are a way of addressing mental health, wellbeing and inclusion in schools, and promoting positive behaviour. They are also a foundation for restorative approaches.

Outcomes: Evidence indicates that relationships, class ethos, behaviour, confidence, communication skills all change in positive ways. (McCarthy and Roffey, 2013; Dobia et al, 2014).

“I am having a wonderful time running Circles here and the children are really enjoying it and using the skills they learn - very exciting”

Email 2013