

# HOW TO STRUCTURE A WOMEN'S CIRCLE

Women have been gathering in circles since the beginning of time to share experiences, stories, thoughts, ideas and prayers.

Women's Circles offer a safe and gentle space for women of all ages and backgrounds to come together and share.

For those of you looking to create a Women's Circle, I have written down the structure of my own women's circles. I hope you enjoy and find the information useful. (The following structure can easily be applied to a Men's Circle as well.)

## POSSIBLE LOCATIONS

Anywhere quiet and private; your home, a yoga studio, a church willing to rent or offer the space, after-hours at a school

## DURATION

90 minutes - 2 hours

## FREQUENCY

Once a week is ideal. Twice a month or monthly is most common.

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

This can vary anywhere from 3-30 people. In my experience, an ideal number is 6-13 participants. If you have a large group, divide the time-length of the circle by the number of participants. Tell the participants approximately how many minutes they have to share in the circle.

## FEE

This is up to you. You might offer the circle for free or ask a rate which covers your expenses.

## IDEAS FOR SUBJECTS

At this point in your life ...what is your experience of being a woman? What have you learned of being a woman? How do you define woman? How do you define feminine?

Sex/Intercourse - Share your story of your first time having sex. What do you enjoy sexually? What do you dislike sexually? Are you having sex? Having a dry spell? Having sex a lot or hoping for more? What is your experience of sex? What words are comfortable to describe sex? What words are uncomfortable to describe sex?

Sexuality - Define sexuality. Who defined it? Where and when did the definition come from? Is sexuality the same thing as sex?

Childhood Religion - How has religion shaped your views of femininity and womanhood? Of spirituality? What were your experiences with religion as a child?

Nature - What is your relationship to nature? When do you feel the most connected to nature? How is your body affected by seasons, moon phases, etc.?

Creativity - What makes you feel creative? Where does your creativity come from? How does creativity relate to being a woman?

Intuition - Does intuition belong more to women, men or both? What is your experience with intuition? Where does intuition come from? Who are the most intuitive people you know? How do you feel around these people?

A Long Lineage: Our mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers...what do you know of them?

Food - Sharing stories about relationship to food, eating, the togetherness or lack of togetherness at meals, cooking, anorexia, bulimia, overeating, shame with food

Our Mothers, Ourselves - Are we our mothers? What are the similarities between you and your mother? The differences? What are your judgements of your mother? What have you learned from your mothers mistakes and triumphs?

Beauty: Mirror, Mirror on the Wall - What is beautiful? Do you feel beautiful? What is it that makes you feel beautiful? What are your experiences and beliefs with plastic

surgery, make-up, high heels, lingerie? How do you define external and internal beauty?

New Paths to Power - Do you feel powerful? What is power to you? How have you experienced power as a woman?

Giving Birth - to projects, ideas, art, food and children. How do you define birth? What is your birth story? How do you feel about the subject of birth?

Menstruation: The Bleeding Time - What are your fears about your period? How do you feel at the time of menstruation? What was it like for you when you first got your period? Who was around and what happened?

Money: Making It and Spending It

Menopause: The Wisdom Years

Death and Dying, Letting go, Endings

## **HOW I STRUCTURE MY CIRCLE**

1. Plan. Prepare your subject. Research and journal, meditate and contemplate the subject you would like to introduce. Also prepare a poem, song or meditation for the closing of the circle.

2. Set your intention as facilitator.

3. Gather supplies. I hold my circles at a yoga studio where bolsters are available. I buy flower petals (to create a mandala) and chocolate to share after the circle is complete. I also bring my deck of angel cards, a bundle of sage, candles, my talking stick (used in native american talking circles), and a feather for smudging (Google 'sage smudging') the participants. If I will offer a writing exercise, I supply paper and pens.

4. When you arrive at your location, turn on some gentle music, smudge the space with the sage. If smudging with sage isn't possible in your space, take a walk around the space reflecting on your intention as the facilitator.

5. Organize the pillows in a circle.

6. Create a center piece. In Bali I have access to flower petals. I use the flower petals to create a flower mandala. I usually begin the mandala drawing a heart or circle with the flower petals. As the women arrive I ask them to help create the remainder of the mandala. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Google some images of mandalas and center pieces to see what you are drawn to. It is a beautiful experience to co-create the center piece. You might even have each person bring in flowers, candles, etc. as an offering to the mandala or centerpiece. I also ask one of the participants to lay the angel card deck in a circle around the mandala.

7. As the group arrives, welcome them and ask them to choose a place to sit. You can invite the group to choose an angel card. In my experience, people really enjoy choosing a card and letting the message of the card stay with them during the circle.

8. When everyone has arrived, introduce yourself. Define what a talking circle/wisdom circle/sharing circle/women's circle is. Tell the group the structure of the circle. You might say something like this...

"This circle is held as a ceremony. First, I will create a safe/sacred space by using sage and a feather. I will have each of you stand and sage smoke will be waved around your body. This is a way to clear the energy of the day. Second, we will call-in/ invoke support with an invocation. Third, I will open the circle by introducing the subject that has been chosen. The talking stick will be passed around the circle. You may share or pass if you choose. The person with the talking stick is the only one speaking at that time. After each person has shared I will close the circle. We will then have chocolate and integration time."

At this point its important to go around the circle and have each person in the group say,

"I agree" to the circle. Any person uncomfortable with the structure may choose to step out.

9. Begin smudging each participant. Ask that the group meditate, rest, write or stretch at this time but to remain silent.

10. Invocation - Go around the circle and have each woman say her own name, her mother's name and her grandmother's name...maybe even her great grandmother's name. Be sure to include the women who may not have close relations with their mothers or women who are adopted. It's important to add that each woman is

welcome to call in “any caretaker, mentor or female friend.” This is a way of ‘invoking’ or ‘calling in’ the women that have walked before us, have walked with us and have guided us. The same exact process is done for a Man’s Circle -calling in the Fathers, Grandfathers, etc. Have everyone close their eyes for a few minutes after this invocation. Feel into the power of invoking the women of our lives.

11. Open the circle. Introduce the subject. Give 2-3 possible ways/angles to approach the subject. Begin the circle by sharing your part with the talking stick in your hand. When you are finished sharing you might say ‘thank you for listening’. Pass the talking stick clockwise.

12. Once everyone has shared, close with a poem, song or prayer. Thank the women that were invoked into the space; the mothers, grandmothers and friends.

13. Bring out the chocolate and tea! Turn on some music. Enjoy being together. Let everyone know they are welcome to leave at any point now that the circle is closed.

### **You might consider holding your Women’s circle according to the cycles of the moon. Here is why:**

#### New Moon Ritual

The “Moon Den” is based on a concept taken from an ancient Native American Indian tradition where women entered a “moon hut” during the new moon of each month. When women's bodies were more in tuned with nature, as the moon entered her dark phase, women would begin to menstruate. During the first three days of their menses, women would stop their work and daily responsibilities and enter the moon hut to rest and recuperate. This is the native Indians' way of honoring the Divine Feminine in women and in all aspect life. Like their moon hut, the Moon Den offers its space for women to retreat from the outside world and journey inward during the new moon of every month. We perform a ritual to align ourselves with the energy of that new moon and use that concentrated energy to manifest the highest intention in our lives. Time is also given for women to reflect on her experiences and feelings and to be in silence and stillness.

## Full Moon Ritual

The Full Moon is a time to release the intention we set during the darkness of the New Moon and the careful nurturing of that intention during the 2 weeks that followed. Whatever we have not manifested, we offer it up to the hands of the Divine, trusting that if our intention is for our Highest good, the time will come when we experience it.

During our full moon ritual, we also celebrate what has come to fruition and give thanks to life and all the goodness in it. Through sharing food and drinks, chanting, dancing, and loving-kindness meditation we generate an abundance of energy to fully charge ourselves, then shower this energy as love and blessings to all.

## RESOURCES

### **The most helpful book I've found on creating a Women's Circle:**

Sacred Circles: A Guide to Creating Your Own Women's Spirituality Group by Robin Deen Carnes and Sally Craig

### **Two books I always recommend to the women at my Women's Circles are:**

Warrior Goddess Training by HeatherAsh Amara

Moon Time (2nd Edition) by Lucy. H Pearce

### **Other Resources:**

<http://www.mysticmamma.com/new-moon-goddess-gatherings/>

<http://www.girlfriendcircles.com/blog/index.php/2014/04/the-power-of-women-in-circle-ideas-womens-groups/>

<http://redtenttemplemovement.com/frequently-asked-questions/>

[http://ravenspeaks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Sharing\\_Circle\\_Instructions\\_SECONDARY.pdf](http://ravenspeaks.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Sharing_Circle_Instructions_SECONDARY.pdf)

<http://www.muiniskw.org/pgCulture2c.htm>

<http://firstnationspedagogy.ca/circletalks.html>

Holding a circle is an absolute joy and incredibly satisfying. It is also a great service to your community of women.

Be brave.

Go for it!

You will be supported.

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*Feel free to pass on this information!*

To learn HOW to facilitate women's circles,  
my 3 Day, 50 Hour & **200 Hour Women's SelfCare Trainings** will guide you.

See [here!](#)

With Gratitude,

Emily Kuser