

Woman Within Open Circles | a new kind of connection





Are you ready for an inner adventure?

As a community of women we support and empower each other to be the best we can be. Hosting an Open Circle connects you with women from your local area, both those who have done the Weekend and others who may be seeking connection.





What you'll need

- Small tablecloth
- Candle in a jar
- Matches
- Dried white sage or smudge stick in a heat proof bowl or tin
- Rattle
- Speaking Stone
- Tissues
- The book Circle of Stones by Judith Duerk
- Plastic box with change for room hire payment
- Pink roses (optional)
- Ting shaws (small cymbals) (optional)

You may also choose to keep a note pad and some paper and pens in supplies.



Outline

- 1) Open door 15 mins early for tea, socializing, intros, signing in with email address, and signing of release forms.
- 2) Smudge, rattle, and ritual. Use a singing bowl or tingshas instead of smudging if anyone is allergic or sensitive to smoke or sage. Explanation before we start -not religious but about cleansing and healing.
- 3) Reading from Circle of Stones or your own choice.
- 4) Intro to circles. Here is what to talk about.
 - WW as the sponsoring organization
 - Introduce self as leading this circle
 - Everyone in the circle has wisdom
 - This is a gift to the community from our nonprofit organization, and we are not selling anything.
 - No one is required to share,
 - They are welcome to come as often or as infrequently as they want
 - We have a Weekend and also a Circle Training
 - We welcome their involvement in whatever way works for them
 - There are women here (if there are) who can answer questions about these other programmes
- 5) Address safety and other circle behaviour. Talk about Confidentiality, Advice, Touching, Tissues, I Statements, Storytelling
- 6) Introduce the speaking stone, and two word check in, then check in as a model and pass the stone.
- 6(a) Optional silent meditation time after introducing speaking stone.
- 7) Introduce the idea of "personal growth work," which in open circle consists of sharing, probing questions, and feedback.



Outline

8) At this point, the circle can go two ways.

- The first is simply dividing the time (with a couple minutes shaved off each to allow for transition or running over) and pass the stone.
- The second is to do a finger rating system to see who has “big” personal growth work and to prioritize, and this is detailed below. If you are going to use the rating/priority system, proceed this way:

a) Explain about the finger rating system (0-5, intensity and immediacy, about 5 minutes per finger is needed).

b) Have everyone close eyes and put up fingers, then open eyes, leaving their fingers up.

c) I take a piece of paper and pen, and go around the circle to get their number and "headline" of what their work is about.

d) Go to big numbers first and work down, asking if women are ready to go or want to pass till later, unless someone is falling apart who had a lower number, in which case go directly to her.

9) Say another few words about WW and the Weekend, especially if there are women in the Circle who clearly could benefit, or if a Weekend is coming up within the next 6 months.

10) Reiterate that women are welcome in circle no matter what, and that they don't ever have to attend the Weekend to be welcome here.

11) Do another reading. Something from Circle of Stones that says, “How would your life be different if...” and the content is about having a circle of women.

12) Check out.

13) Invite women to stick around for 10-15 more mins if they wish to chat with each other or have any questions.



How to Support Other Women

The most important thing to remember is that you cannot solve other people's problems for them. No matter how much insight you think you have into her issues, the other woman must come to her own decision and achieve her own insight into the situation and into herself. There are two basic things that determine the effectiveness of your help:

- Your intentions and attitudes as you listen and give your response.
- The actual phrasing of your response.

Your intentions are the most important single factor in helping other women. It is important to show acceptance and respect. No matter how convinced you are that you know what the other person "should" do, your goal in helping is to assist her not by solving her problems, but by helping her to clarify her feelings and by helping her to reach her own decisions and to form her own insights. What is really needed is to be there with another woman, to hear what she is saying, and to witness a part of her work, if only for a moment.

Use the following Guidelines:

- Listen not to just the words but to the "core" of what is being said.
 - Use perception checking to avoid misunderstanding. (i.e. *What I am sensing or hearing is...*)
 - Don't ask a lot of questions; reflect feelings instead. Be aware of the temptation to rescue, thus taking a person out of her feelings. Allow feelings to emerge while containing the need or desire to do something. Debrief the temptation later.
 - Allow silence even though you may feel that it's necessary to jump in as soon as a woman is taking a pause. Responding really means to just "be" with another person.
 - Ask the woman what she needs right now.
 - Always pay attention to how you are feeling when another woman is sharing.
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A word from the wise

“Don't do any deep process work with new women.

It's risky and can backfire. It can also scare the newbies. Whoever is leading the circle needs to be super aware of her own limitations and not overstep. What works in your regular Circle may not be cool in Open Circle. Consider how you will handle it if someone new (uninitiated or just hasn't done a lot of work) contacts you afterward and says she's having nightmares or PTSD since the circle? If the answer is that you don't know, make sure the work you do isn't likely to trigger that kind of reaction. Even if you do know how to handle it, it's not advisable to tempt fate”.

“Don't usually teach clearings in Open Circle. The nature of the open circle is such that these women are not likely to have issues with each other, because different women show up every time and even if some are the same, they don't tend to know each other well enough to have an issue. Women come to open circle to be seen and heard in a new way. It's not about clearing conflict the way it could be in a group that's working together consistently. And if a woman comes in with a conflict from outside, like at work, work on her feelings about the situation. A role play can be a better choice if she has something she needs to say to someone in the “outside” world”.

“Keep it simple! These evenings are revolutionary for most women. Women have said that they can't believe they shared like that (and were shared with) in a group where they didn't know anyone before”.

“Don't do exercises or break up into smaller groups. Experience of many Open Circles indicates that sharing or work takes the whole time. Why add any complication when this already flows so well as is? Give them the floor for the whole time. This is more likely to have them wanting to come back”.

Woman Within Open Circle

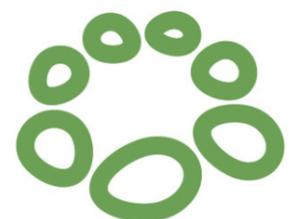
Participant Consent

- I agree to keep anything that is said or done in this Circle confidential. Everything stays within the group. I agree to respect the confidentiality of all the women in this Circle, including their comments and actions.
- I commit to the Circle and to myself to speak my feelings. I will deal openly and honestly with judgments and negative feedback, both my own and others'. I commit to respect the other women in the Circle.
- I commit not to use any or all materials provided by me in the context of this Woman Within Circle for any other purpose unless mutually agreed by both parties.
- I am participating of my own choice in this Open Women's Circle and not as a result of coercion, pressure or to satisfy anyone other than myself. I understand that this Woman Within Open Circle is an educational forum for support and connection, and not a substitute for psychotherapy.
- I take responsibility for consulting with a medical doctor and/or therapist concerning any known or potential physical or mental conditions that I have or may have, for the purpose of getting medical permission to participate in this Woman Within Circle. I assume the risk, by this consent, of any illness during the sessions and hereby release any woman in my Circle, Woman Within International and its Regions, community members or staff from any liability. I am not having suicidal thoughts at this time. In the event that I have suicidal thoughts, or that group member(s) perceive that I may be having suicidal thoughts, I will seek medical assistance, and withdraw from this Circle until such time as I have received medical assistance.
- I understand that in addition to the benefit, there is always the risk of emotional and/or medical contingencies in such a group experience. I authorize the responsible persons to take any reasonable steps on my behalf in the case of an accident, injury or illness, including, but not limited to, emergency first aid, doctor, nurse and/or ambulance services, etc. I agree to be liable for the cost of any such action taken on my behalf, and hereby release any woman in my Circle, Woman Within International or its Regions, community members or staff from liability. These organizations are in no way liable for what I or any other member of our Circle chooses to do. I release Woman Within International Ltd. and any of its licensed Regions, community members or staff from any and all liability. I hereby agree to the above.

Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____



WOMAN WITHIN
CIRCLES



Open Circle Invitation

I'd like to invite you to join me in a unique experience. If you've never experienced sitting in a Circle of women, please consider giving yourself a few hours of 'you' time.

Take a breath from your busy life. See if there's anything you'd like to share. Or anything you'd like to better understand about yourself. And listen as other women like you come together to share the things that are important to them. We're all on a journey. I hope you'll choose to come, at least once and give it a try!

Attending your first Circle will cost you nothing, except a couple of hours. I know you'll walk away with at least one new thing you'll learn about yourself. While you're here you may work on an issue that's come up in your life. You are also welcome to simply come and be present without working on anything. Nobody is required to share. Women are often amazed at how much can be gained from a single evening spent in one of these circles, which typically number 4-12 women on any given evening.

This Circle is a part of a larger, global community of women called Woman Within. It's open to any woman over 18 years of age, of any race, belief system or sexual orientation.

If you decide to join a Circle on a regular basis, you'll pay a nominal (£25/year) fee to Woman Within UK that helps our community sustain and grow. Other than that, there is no cost for you to come, enjoy, connect and be inspired by sitting in a Woman Within Circle.

Please let me know if you plan to come. Include your email address if you want to be placed on my email reminder list for future circles.

Feel free to bring friends with you and/or forward this to your friends. All I ask is that you let me know the number of women, and please include your phone number so I can reach you in case of last minute changes.

Place:

Date:

Time:

Contact:

No need to bring anything except yourself



Time to Prepare

- Review handouts so you are prepared for the circle in advance
 - Take this time as 'your time', away from mobile phones, computers and multi-tasking
 - Before your circle begins, find silence and connect with your heart place: stand tall with feet firmly planted, stretch arms overhead, take deep breaths and release slowly
 - Honour the commitment that we join and leave the circle together so be mindful of time.
 - Prepare a quiet private space where the circle can sit comfortably with a clear view of all circle members
 - Place ritual items either on the floor in the centre or on small table
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A close-up photograph of several people's hands stacked together in a circle, symbolizing unity and support. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing different accessories like bracelets and watches. The background is blurred, showing other people and a green field.

**Say the things you've
wanted to say for a
long time – and be
met with acceptance
instead of judgment.**
