City of Philadelphia

Care as a First Response
Community Healing Circles Best Practices

Please note, this is guidance we're offering that we're using in our City Healing Circles; it was developed from a trauma-informed perspective, and we hope it is helpful to the community.

Convening the Circle

Prior to going into the prompts, Facilitators should remind participants of the initial guidelines and ask their group if there are additional guidelines needed.

After briefly discussing the guidelines, ask participants to introduce themselves (name and neighborhood) [and make sure to have participants change their name in their Zoom screen?]

Example

> *Good evening and welcome to this healing circle. My name is [name] and I am from [organization] and I will be co-facilitating our time together with [name] who will introduce themselves.* ***co-facilitator introduces themselves*** *Before we begin, we would like to remind you of the community agreements that were shared at the beginning of the program:*
>
> ### *Guidelines for Discussion*
>
> - **This healing circle is about responding to each other with care.** Tonight is about fully seeing and hearing each other as we name what is painful, enraging, or numbing about living through the losses we have faced due to racialized violence. Tonight is about making room to imagine what we need to feel more whole.

- In order to fill this space with meaning and compassion, we invite you to consent to the following guidelines for the evening:

- Though we have different roles, identities, backgrounds, and forms of power, we are gathered because we care deeply for our city, and we all have a stake in our collective grief, healing, and transformation.

- We each have unique points of view. When sharing, speak from your own perspective and experience.

- Be mindful that some people process their thoughts by talking, and others need more thinking time before they respond. Let's try to make room for all to be heard.

- When you are not speaking, listen with a curious, open mind. Find connections in what you hear, whether they are similar or different from your own thoughts and feelings.

- There may be times when silence is needed after a question or comment is raised or after a story is told. It is okay to sit quietly to take in the moment.

- There are no right or wrong feelings. We are gathered to respect the complexity and diversity of our thoughts and experiences.

Heart of the Circle

After everyone has introduced themselves, you may use the following prompts for your discussion:

First prompt: Setting Context

1. What are you feeling in the wake of the trial of Derek Chauvin? How have the past few months and the past year in general affected you?

Second prompt: Sharing with Vulnerability

1. What has felt most hard for you over the past year or several months? Do you feel stuck in any way? How so?
2. How do you feel safe? What threatens your sense of safety?

Third prompt: Pointing to What's Possible

1. What would help you feel cared for as you navigate these strong and complex emotions? What would support the journey to healing, for yourself and for your family/community?

2. What tangible resources/people would make your healing journey easier?
3. What is the care that you can give to yourself, to your friends and family, to your community?

<u>Leaving the Circle</u>

Keeping track of time, begin moving the discussion towards the third prompt at least 10 minutes prior to the end of the small group session. **DO NOT** force this movement if the group is deep in the second prompt. If you do not get to the last round of questions, that is okay. It is important, however, to bring people out of the circle before returning to the large group. One way to accomplish this is to politely begin wrapping up the discussion about 5-10 minutes (depending on how large the group is) before the end of the session and to ask each person to share in one word how they are feeling. You may also ask each person if there are any burning questions they have as a result of your time together.

For more information, email public.engagement@phila.gov.