



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



We Share Our Feelings Constructively! Open Emotional Expression

During times of stress, families may go through changes to their daily life. When families communicate clearly about these changes through family discussions, all family members can work together to get through hard times and agree on how to address these changes. Clear, compassionate communication and deep listening helps families take action together while building trust and respect.

The Circle Process: Listening and Speaking with Purpose

Relationships are better when people are able to easily share their needs directly and clearly. Listening to the needs of others allows us to show empathy and validate how others may feel. The Circle Process is a method for solving problems and building community through communication. Listening is an important part of the process and requires us to make space for others to talk and to deeply listen.

The Circle Process Activity

Dialogue or peacemaking circles are gatherings where all participants sit in a circle facing each other to have open and direct communication. These circles can be used to encourage better communication between family members.

The Circle Process has three practices:

- **Speaking with intention:** Noting what is important to the conversation in the moment.
- **Listening with attention:** Respectful of the learning process for all members of the group.
- **Tending to the well-being of the circle:** Remaining aware of the impact of contributions.

In many circles, a “talking piece” is used to help facilitate communication. This object, such as a beanbag or stick, is used to ensure that no one else is talking except for the person holding it. The Circle Process can also be used for community conversations. In a community gathering, social distancing guidelines should be observed. Each person should also provide their own talking piece.

Before the activity, invite family members to decide on several questions they want to ask. Examples may include:

- What change would you like to see in your family or community? What can you do to promote that change?
- Name a time when you were outside of your comfort zone. What did you do, and what were the results?
- What are you worried or concerned about? Do you know anyone who is impacted by this? What has been hardest for you? What do you think needs to be done to make things right?

The above activity was adapted from: [Peacemaking Circles](#) and [The Circle Way](#).

To learn more about the science behind the benefits of circle dialogues, you may wish to read the below research:

- [Introducing Healing Circles and Talking Circles into Primary Care.](#)