**Circle for Restorative Learning in the Age of COVID**

**University of New England 8.14.23**

**Purpose:** To introduce Restorative Practices Circle process to participants, have dialogue with participants about the effect of Covid on the learning environment in schools and learn ways to use Restorative Practices protocols to build a positive learning environment for all learners.

**Opening - a quote, movement activity, mindfulness moment, song, poem...**

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| “It’s **RELATIONSHIPS**, not **PROGRAMS** that change **CHILDREN . . .** Young  people thrive when **ADULTS** care about them on a **ONE-TO-ONE** level, and when they have a sense of **BELONGING** to a **CARING COMMUNITY**.” |

**Centerpiece: ​:** Another important element of the restorative circle space is the centerpiece. The centerpiece helps to provide a focus point for the circle participants. The objects that compose the centerpiece often have some kind of symbolic value, so they evoke a space in which people can interact from their core values and connect from their depth. All circle participants are welcome to contribute an object to help form the centerpiece. This instills a sense of shared responsibility to keep the circle space open and respectful. It is also a visible commitment to engage with the circle from a place of truth and authenticity.

**Introduce or Review the Talking Piece -** The first feature of the restorative circle space I want to introduce to you is the talking piece. The talking piece can be any kind of handheld object that can be passed from person to person. We use a talking piece to assure that each person has an equal opportunity to share and to be heard. Whoever is holding the talking piece is the one who has the right to speak, while everyone else listens silently. We ask participants to listen with their ears and eyes. Ears are easy but eyes require a focused effort. When given eye contact, the speaker knows that what is being shared is heard and valued.

**Review Core Values -** . We usually do this with each Learning Community.

1. **Speak from the heart**​: Speak from your direct experience, knowing that your experience has truth and value

2. **Listen from the heart**​: Listen with an attitude of unconditional respect for whatever a person brings to the circle.

3. ​**Trust the process**​: Allow your contribution to the circle to naturally unfold, without trying to conform to what you think others expect.

4. ​**Say just enough**​: Without feeling rushed, choose your words carefully to convey the essence of your message. Ask yourself, how are my words serving the circle?

5. **Keep what is shared confidential**. What’s said in the Circle should not be share without permission of the participants.

Can we all agree to practice these five guidelines while we are in circle together?

Are there any other agreements you would like to propose?

**Introductions or Check-in – Round 1 – A round is a question posed for discussion.**

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| George - Please introduce yourself, your employment position, and what brought you to this session. |

**Round 2**

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| Jeremy will share why he chose this topic for this session. |

**Round 3**

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| George - I have learned that two things that prevent us from being our best selves. Not talking about our FEELINGS and FEARS, and not allowing ourselves to be VULNERABLE. Please share a FEELING, FEAR or VULNERABILITY that you are worried about this past school year. |

**Round 4**

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| George - Share any questions you might have of the Circle Process or reactions to being a participant in this Circle. |

**Closing – Facilitator Choice**

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| “**Either** we spend time meeting **children’s emotional needs** by filling their **cup with love** or we spend time dealing with **the behaviors** caused from their **unmet needs;** either way, **we spend the time**.” -Pam Leo |

#### Closing: Thanks for participanting in this Circle. Does anyone have anything questions?

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