Workshop: Creating Your Circle of Support

The Arc
Northern Virginia

Thursday, October 10, 2019
Introduction
A group of people who agree to meet regularly and assist the focus person to fulfil their dreams and ambitions.
"The very simple process of council takes us to a place of deep connection with each other..."

Meg Wheatley

"Human beings have always sat in circles and councils to do their best thinking, and to develop strong and trusting relationships..."
6.20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city.
Let’s get started

Share some information
Tell one Circle’s story
Share some resources
Focus Person

- Center of all
- Driving force
- For one reason or another, is not getting what they want in life
- Wants support
- Wants help problem-solving
Champion

- Someone trusted
- Supportive
- Helps get the ball rolling . . .
Build A Vision

- Create a clear picture of a “good life” for focus person
- Imagine the Circle working well
A Good Life...

I WANT A LIFE NOT A SERVICE

www.openfuturelearning.org
A good life is a human life. A human life is a social life, the essence of human nature is to be in the company of others.

Al Etmanski
Think about membership

Committed citizens who believe in the Focus Person

Make a list of people who share the vision/purpose of the Circle

- Neighbors
- Extended Family
- Friends
- Shared interest
- Co-workers
- Former staff
- Classmates
List the qualities & connections focus person would like members to have

Who do you know? A ‘relationship map’ can help

Avoid Gloomy Gus, Negative Nancy & Doubting Thomas
Relationship Mapping

- Friends
- Family
- Neighbors
- Class-mates
- FOCUS PERSON
You are cordially to...

- Simple & attractive
- Who, What, When, Where
- Personal is best

Whatcha doing Wednesday at 5:00pm?
Secure Facilitation to

- make easier
- take care of the work required to keep the Circle running
- assure all members are included
- record
- be hospitable
Circle Facilitators

Snacks

Graphic design
Circle Facilitators

✓ Ask questions to help people find answers

✓ Inject humor & fun into get-togethers

✓ Keep meetings from getting stale or unpleasant especially to the focus person
100 Circles in 25 years
Arc of Midland Executive
Supported decision making
Circle as A Midwife
“What we Believe about Circle Building”

- The community is a place where hospitality is common.
- In order to live as we choose & enjoy life, we need other people to support us.
- We are interdependent in our support of each other & the circle gives us an avenue for our independence.
- Circles focus on the individual’s life- the touch & feel of who they want to be & how they want to live - not on the service that an individual receives from the system. A circle creates a life, not a service plan.
“What we Believe about Circle Building”

- We don’t ask people to be someone’s friend when we invite them into a circle, we ask them to be a part of building a better community.

- We can’t ask people to be someone's friend without diminishing the power of the circle. If we do that, the circle is a cheap trick on the individual.

- The circle is an association for the individuals, through which friendship can grow.

- The work of connecting people to others in a community is very hard. The less connected the person is, the harder it is.
Some people have only paid people in their lives. That is their circle. These paid people can build the circle from the outside if they work at connecting & supporting people in new relationships.

A person in a service capacity relationship with individuals cannot facilitate the person’s circle. The service person has other needs to meet, including the needs of the service system.

No one should be required to be a part of a circle as a part of their job. No one should be required to have a circle.
A facilitator for a circle acts as a midwife, letting the circle give birth to ideas and plans with support as needed, but the facilitator does not judge or interfere with the work of the circle.
First Circle Gathering
# What Happens at Circles

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<tr>
<th>GATHER</th>
<th>ENGAGE</th>
<th>RESPOND</th>
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<td>To help you make decisions &amp; have a good life.</td>
<td>Ask &amp; answer questions&lt;br&gt;A Circle should be enduring, and new members may join as needed so you always have someone in your life to help you when you need them.</td>
<td>With respect &amp; listening with all senses to focus person.&lt;br&gt;Track the Circle’s work &amp; review purpose &amp; point of gathering.&lt;br&gt;Reflect the activities &amp; responsibility.</td>
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Informal or formal circles
What Makes Circles Work

- **Informal**: Not too many rules: purpose of every rule is to enable inclusion
- **Mutual**: Everyone involved has influence
- **Diverse**: Bringing in people from different backgrounds and experiences makes circles stronger
- **Co-production**: Power with, not power over
- **Time**: A space to think together. Rounds give everyone equal opportunities to contribute
- **Appreciation**: Helps us feel able to share learning

From Inclusion News
MIKE'S CIRCLE STORY
1. Started with a PARTY!

Cousins
Acquaintances
Co-workers
Siblings’ friends and significant others
Classmates
Neighbors
Customers
Advocates
2. **WHAT**

- Pizza & pop
- Small presentation about Mike’s life
- Tell what a Circle is
- Introduce Facilitator
- Open Invitation to Circle
First meeting 4 weeks later
Mike’s home
Intro & icebreaker
Dinner
Listened to Mike’s expectations of Circle
Easygoing
Lots of Questions
4. **What Mike wanted**

- Make some friends his age
- Job for income
- Take Toastmaster course
- Live in own condo
- More photography
5. What the Circle did

- Brainstorm places to meet others
- Check on employment services for outcomes
- Explored small business ideas
- Dug deep re: condo
- Staying on track with person-centered plans
I like to talk about my goals
Feel better in making decisions
I don’t want my brother and mom making my choices
Get more ideas from Circle

I introduced Mike to my nephew who included him in some fraternity stuff
I am proud to be a part of this Circle. I have learned much more than any formal structure would ever teach me about Mike.
Mike is the expert on his life.
“We have to reject the idea of incompetence. We need to replace it with the idea of “assisted competence”. This will include a range of supports that will enable individual with disabilities to receive assistance in decision-making that will preserve their rights.”

1996

Tom Nerney
1939 - 2018
Center for Self-Determination
GUARDIANSHIP

SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING

- Supports & services that help an adult with a disability make his or her own decisions, by using friends, family members, professionals, & other people he or she trusts: (Dinerstein, 2012; Blanck and Martinis, 2015).
The individual with a disability chooses who they would like to support them & determines when & for what reason they would like the assistance of a Supporter.

A **Supporter** can:

- Help read complicated documents & explain their meaning.
- Attend meetings & help share questions or concerns.
- Help communicate the person’s decisions & preferences to others.
Sounds like Circles of Support

A group of people who agree to meet regularly and assist the focus person to fulfil their dreams and ambitions.
Circle Resources

- All My Life’s A Circle: Using the Tools: Circles, MAPS & PATHS
- Circles Of Support: Building Inclusive Communities
- Creating Circles of Friends: A Peer Support and Inclusion Workbook
- Circles Network: Building Inclusive Communities
- Circles of Support and Personalisation
- Thinking About Circles of Support
- Community Drive Inc.
SDM Resources

- National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making
  http://www.supporteddecisionmaking.org

- Supported Decision-Making & the Problems of Guardianship

- Supported Decision-Making American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights
  https://www.americanbar.org/groups/disabilityrights/resources/article12.html
QUESTIONS
Patricia Carver
5833 Community Drive
Brighton, MI 48116
810-231-6364
pcarver@chartermi.net