

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

How to be an effective community participant in a Restorative Justice Circle

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER – Knowing how the Circle process operates is essential. It takes time to become acquainted with the process. Have an open mind and be ready to learn.

BE WELCOMING – There will be a wide array of emotions felt by all who participate in a Circle. For example, newcomers may feel awkward or someone who is court ordered to be there may feel resentful. Please be accepting and welcoming of all. Again, it takes time to understand the process and what to expect.

BEING IN CIRCLE – A Circle is a unique way to communicate. The keeper of the Circle will explain the philosophy behind Restorative Justice and the guidelines for participating in Circle. The rest is up to each individual person in the process. By bringing your best self, your engagement will impact others.

HONOR THE TALKING PIECE – It may seem silly or awkward at first, but you will see the power of the Circle at the end of the session. If you do not have the Talking Piece your role is to listen. If something you said is acknowledged, don't worry about responding until you have the Talking Piece. If someone speaks out of turn or asks a question, simply look at the Talking Piece to remind them of the guidelines.

SPEAK FROM THE HEART – Sharing personal stories and experiences can make one feel vulnerable. The Circle is designed to move from the surface to the depths of the heart and back again. Relating your experiences in an honest manner is pivotal for a successful Circle meeting.

BE A ROLE MODEL FOR THE PROCESS – As a volunteer, please do not elect to pass. You can always pause for a moment of clarity in order to bring your best self. There is no "right" or "wrong" in Circle. We simply ask for you to provide a non-judgmental and supportive environment.

JUDGE NO ONE – Many of us have a tendency to judge a book by its cover. You may feel tempted in this environment to offer advice or suggest how people should behave. Please do not do this. The contributions we are looking for are your experiences and how they can relate to someone else's experiences. You will be impressed at how meaningful this can be.

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART, RESPOND WITH RESPECT – Do what you can to be fully present to the Circle and the philosophy of Restorative Justice. Provide respectful comments. Things may be said that you do not agree with but save that for reflection after the Circle session has ended. You can always process with Nicole, Drew and other volunteers whenever you need.

BE OPEN – Be open to the idea that you may leave the Circle with new perspectives, attitudes and knowledge. Circles are always learning experiences.

PROMOTE GRACE – Grace is offering unconditional kindness. Grace can help others heal. Helping someone heal transforms an individual, who transforms a family, who in turn can help transform a community.

THANK YOU – Our volunteers are very much appreciated and they play a critical role in all of the Circle Processes that Winona County Restorative Justice offers.