

Processing Circle: Reminders and Invitations for Group¹

(to be read out loud while whole group is together)

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- **PROCESSING CIRCLES:** What we will be doing today is sometimes called a processing or debriefing circle. We do not usually use this circle model to help people address difficult conflicts. For conflicts, we facilitate a dialogue. For processing an event we use a talking piece that goes around.
- **TALKING PIECE:** For our talking piece(s) today we will use X, which represents Y. When you do not have the talking piece, please practice listening. When you have the talking piece, please take your time to think about your answer if you need to. No rush to answer quickly. When you are done, pass it to your left.
- **SPEAKING AND LISTENING FROM THE HEART:** In either case, as Dominic Barter reminds us, a circle is not a circle because of the way we arrange our chairs. The power of a circle comes from how deeply we listen and how much truth we speak into the circle. When anyone stops listening to think about their own answer it changes the circle. We can all feel the difference. Trust that when your turn comes you will find the right words. The rest of the time, we invite you to listen deeply to whomever is speaking.
- **PASS ANY TIME:** Feel free to pass any time, though I encourage you to stretch to stay engaged. Passing does not mean you are not engaged. It means you are not ready to speak out loud yet.
- **TEARS AND EMOTIONS:** A quick reminder about tears and other strong emotions. If someone in the circle is moved to tears, our temptation is to offer them comfort or reassurance. Let's try to remember that tears simply mean that something is important – that something matters. It does not mean anything is broken and needs fixing or anyone is drowning and needs rescuing. Thus, I invite you to hold the person with care and let them ask for what they need from us – if anything. There are also tissues in the middle of the circle that people can grab if they want to.
- **TIME TRAVELER:** We will use the Time Traveler circle recipe to move through our circle. Feel free to borrow this model for your own processing circles. *[if possible – put the three questions on the board for everyone to see]*
 - We will start with the PRESENT – how we are feeling RIGHT NOW about what happened.
 - We will move to the PAST to see what we NEEDED back when it happened.
 - We will end with the FUTURE - how we want to MOVE FORWARD.
- **CIRCLE KEEPER ANSWERS EVERY QUESTION FIRST:** I will start by answering each question in the rounds to lead the way. Like you, I will take my time to think about the answer when I need to.
- **QUESTIONS:** Do you have any questions before we continue?

TIME TRAVELER

1. **PRESENT:** How are you feeling RIGHT NOW about what happened?
2. **PAST:** What were your hopes and needs for yourself or others WHEN IT HAPPENED or AS IT WAS HAPPENING?
3. **FUTURE:** Can anyone please take notes for this round if we do come up with any specific actions? OK - Moving FORWARD, how do we make things better? What are ideas we have? [jot down only specific actions, not personal intentions]

¹ Based on the work of Kay Pranis and Dominic Barter