

# Handbook for Facilitation of Restorative Practices in Child Care Institutions



**Enfold Proactive Health Trust, Bangalore**



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# About Enfold

Enfold Proactive Health Trust, a non-profit based in Bengaluru, India, founded in 2001. It aims to address gender-based violence and sexual abuse, through education, awareness, rehabilitative support for survivors of child sexual abuse, and restorative processes with children in schools and the Juvenile Justice system. The organisation works towards creating safe spaces, where all genders are equally valued and respected, every child is safe, and people of all genders feel empowered and accountable. This is achieved through strong field-based engagement, and direct work with children and adults in colleges, schools, in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), and the community. Enfold builds the capacity of functionaries of the criminal justice system and child protection system, medical practitioners, social workers, counsellors, and media personnel. Enfold works with State Governments across the country, providing training and technical support to authorities and functionaries under the child protection system, conducting research studies, offering recommendations for the effective implementation of child laws, and supporting the formulation of Child Safeguarding Policies and their effective implementation.

Enfold's Prevention team has been working towards addressing and preventing child sexual abuse across multiple platforms through age-appropriate, value-based Gender Equity, Sexuality and Personal Safety Education programs. Children are supported to learn to recognize abuse, and exercise agency in order to act against and report sexual abuse to safe adults. The team also supports schools in setting up robust systems for effective prevention and response to child sexual abuse. The Rehabilitation and Reintegration team provides a range of support services to children and families who report sexual abuse, right from the time of reporting of the abuse, through the various procedures in the criminal justice system, focusing on enabling child survivors of sexual abuse to live with dignity, access justice and healing. The Restorative Practices team has been actively using Restorative Practices to build and strengthen community, impart social and emotional learning, address misbehavior or harm, and repair relationships within the Juvenile Justice system and in schools.

For more information, visit <http://enfoldindia.org/>

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inspiration from all their work and wisdom, and this has served as rich guidance on our journey of facilitating Restorative Circles within the Juvenile Justice System, in schools, and at the workplace. We would also like to express our deep gratitude to Kay Pranis and Molly R Leach from RJ on the Rise for giving us a scholarship that made it possible for the entire team at Enfold Trust to attend training on facilitating Restorative Circles online.

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## About the Handbook

Restorative Circles are part of a wider continuum of practices in Restorative Justice, which include both formal and informal processes. These may include restorative conversations, Family Group Conferences, Victim-Offender Dialogues, and Restorative Circles. Restorative Circles can also be of many types. This Handbook focuses on the work undertaken by the Restorative Practices Team at Enfold, with children residing in CCIs.

Since 2019, the Restorative Practice team at Enfold Proactive Health Trust has been facilitating Restorative Circles with the staff and children of Observation Homes, Place of Safety, and Children's Homes under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

This Handbook has been developed to share the insights that have emerged from our experience of facilitating over 250 Circles with children and adults. We believe that Restorative Practice is a way of life, and so our understanding and practice of Restorative Circles will always continue to evolve. This Handbook is therefore an initial offering gleaned from our learning so far, learning that has come from engagement with theory and conceptual frameworks, and with practice with children as well as in our team through regular Praxis. We hope this will be useful for organisations and individuals who have undergone basic training on Restorative Circles and wish to facilitate Circles with children in CCI or other settings.

Chapter 1 of the Handbook provides an overview of the use of restorative practices in residential facilities for children. Chapter 2 unpacks the key elements of Restorative Circle and Chapter 3 details the experience of the RP team in facilitating life skills through Restorative Circles, its transformative potential for children and adults, and tips for Circle Keepers. Chapter 4 contains 12 templates of Restorative Circles that have been facilitated by the Enfold Team with children above 12 years of age. It contains plans for Restorative Circles that have been used by the team, including activities that were conducted, and adapted from different sources to make it socio-culturally relevant for children in CCIs. The Circles have been inspired by resources such as *Heart of Hope*<sup>1</sup> and *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*,<sup>2</sup> among other resources.

1 Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships*, (2010) Living Justice Press.

2 Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Circle forward: building a restorative school community* (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.

# CHAPTER I

## Restorative Practices in Child Care Institutions

### 1.1. Conceptual Framework

Restorative Practices (RP) refer to a broad set of processes, values and ideas that seek to create an atmosphere of connection and care. Here, values such as empathy, respect, equality, and voluntariness are prioritized, while fostering a relational way of being. RP amplifies the idea of centering community, and dismantling systems of hierarchy and oppression. RP has been used proactively, to build community and relationships; it has also been used responsively as non-punitive, and targeted interventions for those who have been harmed, as well as those who cause harm. Restorative Justice is often considered to be a subset of Restorative Practices, which is used to address harms.<sup>3</sup>

A Restorative Circle, a type of restorative practice drawn from indigenous traditional practice, serves as a tool for social and emotional learning, life skills education, and conflict resolution; it focuses upon community-oriented healing, and relationship-building processes.<sup>4</sup> A difference between Restorative Circles and other forms of dialogue is that in the former, the dialogue is guided by values that are suggested and agreed to by participants themselves. The Circle is premised on equality and equalization of power. Participants are usually seated in the shape of a circle to symbolize that everyone in the space is equal and connected to each other, and that there is no power centre. Only the person holding the Talking Piece may speak. The essence of Restorative Circles lies in the fact that it creates a safe space in which everyone's dignity is honored and everyone is seen and heard. Restorative Circles are similar but not the same as 'Circle time' that may be practiced in some educational institutions or CCIs. Restorative Circles may be of different types, depending on the situation; examples include talking Circles, community building Circles, reintegration Circles, and Circles of Support and Accountability.

Restorative justice (RJ) has been described as a social movement, a process, as well as a paradigm.<sup>5</sup> It focuses on meeting the needs of those who have been harmed, those who have caused harm, and the larger community impacted by the harm. All this is done while also allowing for compassionate accountability and support for those who have harmed and transforming relationships. RJ/RP processes can look different based on the participants involved and can include Restorative Circles, conferencing and restorative dialogues, among others. RJ has been especially beneficial when used with youths who have caused harm and youths who have been harmed. Several international instruments emphasize the need for RJ to be an integral part of the juvenile justice system.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the ultimate objective of the juvenile justice system in India is reformation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law.<sup>7</sup> RJ/RP in CCIs helps to achieve this and facilitates the restoration of a child.<sup>8</sup>

Child-sensitive RJ/RP may involve bringing together the harmed youth, the youth who has caused harm, their caregivers, child protection and justice functionaries and other stakeholders in the community. This generally

3 Restorative Practices Working Group. (2014). Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools (A Guide for Educators), p. 3.

4 Kay Pranis, *Little book of Circle Processes: A new/old approach to peacemaking* (2015).

5 A. J. Woolford & A. Nelund, *The politics of restorative justice: A critical introduction*, (2009). Nova Scotia: Fernwood; Pavlich, G. (2005). Governing paradoxes of restorative justice. Psychology Press.

6 Terre des Hommes et al. (2009). *The Lima Declaration on Restorative Juvenile Justice, CRC (art 40 (1))*. Retrieved from: [https://www.tdh.ch/sites/default/files/declaration-de-lima-sur-la-justice-juvenile-restauratrice\\_en.pdf](https://www.tdh.ch/sites/default/files/declaration-de-lima-sur-la-justice-juvenile-restauratrice_en.pdf)

7 A. Vijayalakshmi, Scope and Applicability of Restorative Justice for Juveniles in Conflict with the Law. In *Restorative Justice in India* (2017), p. 174.

8 Id.

takes place in a safe and structured environment, through a non-adversarial and voluntary process. Family Group Conferences, Restorative Circle processes, and Victim-Offender Dialogues, have been used in several different stages of the criminal justice process, and may even be used for diversion from the juvenile justice system.

RJ/RP in CCIs is “intended to play a role in both reducing anti-social behaviour through a process of emotional and moral education, and in reducing criminalization of children by reducing the need to involve the police and the court.”<sup>9</sup> Clough et al<sup>10</sup> have identified certain ‘best practices’ for using restorative skills in CCIs. This includes, among others, developing empathy and listening skills, providing a chance to share narratives, and understanding and responding to people’s needs. A restorative approach in a care setting shifts the emphasis from managing behaviour to focusing on building, nurturing and repairing relationships.<sup>11</sup> Restorative approaches are facilitated in such a manner that the focus shifts from blaming, to improving interpersonal relationships.

Within CCIs, RJ/RP requires a multi-sectoral approach.<sup>12</sup> It may also include the provision of education, psycho-social support, life skills, vocational training, mediation<sup>13</sup> and conflict resolution practices<sup>14</sup> as well.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.2. Alignment of Restorative Practices with Principles of Juvenile Justice

Restorative Practices are centered upon the dignity of all human beings, a principle that is also at the heart of the JJ system under Sec. 3(ii) of the JJ Act, 2015 and Art. 6, 37(c), and 40(1) of the UNCRC, which recognizes children’s inherent right to life and requires children deprived of their liberty to be “treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person” and “which takes into account the child’s age and the desirability of promoting the child’s reintegration and the child’s assuming a constructive role in society”. This is evinced by the voluntary nature of the Restorative Circle process, one that also ensures that the dignity of

all participants is respected during the process. Best practices also entail engaging in restorative conversations using restorative language, - helpful in ensuring that the child is not subjected to stigma, shame, or abuse to satisfy the victim or the community, thus ensuring compliance with the principle of non-stigmatizing semantics under Sec. 3(viii) of the JJ Act, 2015.

Restorative Practices can be effectively used to promote community building and a restorative culture within CCIs. Staff can be supported through Circle processes to enhance the effective performance of their roles,

9 Hopkins cited in Dr. Willie McCarney, “A Restorative Justice Approach to Working with Children in Residential Care, Northern Ireland, (pp. 13); This point is made in the context of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, where the local police are generally involved in managing behaviours deemed inappropriate within CCIs.

10 R. Bullock Clough & A. Ward, *What works in Residential Child Care*, (2006). London: National Children’s Bureau.

11 B. Hopkins, B, Restorative approaches in residential child care (2008),*National Child Care Bureau. Highlight*, pp. 242, 335-50. Retrieved from: [https://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/projects/aces/getfile.php?src=2090/Restorative+Approaches+in+Residential+Care\\_242.pdf](https://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/projects/aces/getfile.php?src=2090/Restorative+Approaches+in+Residential+Care_242.pdf)

12 United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. 2011. *Promoting Restorative Justice for Children*. United Nations Publications. Retrieved from: <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/file/2180/download?token=JR94W53U>

13 Mediation refers to a technique/process wherein a trained facilitator facilitates a conversation between parties who are experiencing a conflict. This process allows the parties to arrive at solutions by themselves, and also helps in repairing relationships. Trained mediators may also further train young persons to mediate conversations with their peers who are experiencing interpersonal conflicts, in a technique called “peer-mediation”.

14 Conflict resolution practices include mediation, negotiation (where parties to a conflict use skilled conversation techniques such as focusing on the issue at hand, focusing on needs, and having best alternatives to a negotiation), facilitation (where a facilitator guides a dialogue to help parties arrive at a mutually agreed upon solution to a conflict), and other interpersonal life skills (such as listening, nonviolent communication, decision-making, etc).

15 United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. 2011. *Promoting Restorative Justice for Children*. United Nations Publications. Retrieved from: <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/file/2180/download?token=JR94W53U>

given that they have a duty to ensure the care and protection of children placed in their care. The Person in Charge of the CCI can be supported in her role of managing the CCI, through restorative practices. For example, JJ Model Rule 61(1) places a duty on the Person in Charge of the CCI specifically stating that ‘the primary responsibility of the Person-in-charge is of maintaining the Child Care Institution and of providing care and protection to the children’. Additionally, aside from other managerial duties, the Person in Charge is vested with the following responsibilities -

- ‘provide homely and enabling atmosphere of love, affection, care and concern for children’,
- ‘strive for the development and welfare of the children’,
- ‘supervise and monitor discipline and well-being of the children and the staff’, and
- ‘maintain standards of care in the Child Care Institution’.<sup>16</sup>

Circle processes and other restorative practices can be effectively used in enabling staff to develop a shared vision for how the CCI can be a place that enables children to feel safe and cared for, particularly given that these CCIs are meant to be ‘Homes’, which are ‘child-friendly’. In this context, S. 2(15), JJA, defines the term “child friendly” which means “any behaviour, conduct, practice, process, attitude, environment or treatment that is humane, considerate and in the best interest of the child”. As per Section 2(9), JJ Act, 2015, the term “best interests of the child” has been defined to mean “the basis for any decision taken regarding the child, to ensure fulfilment of his basic rights and needs, identity, social well-being and physical, emotional and intellectual development”.

The fundamental principle of participation, enshrined in Section 3, JJ Act, 2015 requires that ‘every child shall have a right to be heard and to participate in all processes and decisions affecting his interest and the child’s views shall be taken into consideration with due regard to the age and maturity of the child.’ Staff of the CCI are therefore duty bound to not only be child friendly, but engage with children through a child-rights based approach and make decisions *with* them (bearing in mind their right to be heard) rather than *for* them, and these decisions have to be in their best interests. Restorative Practices can be used to enable staff to engage with each and every child alleged to be in conflict with law as a human being with basic needs that have not been met; as a citizen who is a rights holder with inherent dignity and worth, irrespective of whether or not the child has committed a crime; and to provide individualized attention in order to ‘restore the child’s self-esteem, dignity and self-worth and nurture him into a responsible citizen’<sup>17</sup>.

Children residing in CCIs established/registered under the JJ Act, 2015 house children who largely hail from very vulnerable backgrounds, with adverse childhood experiences. Restorative processes can serve as a tool to repair and rebuild familial relationships in furtherance of the principles of family responsibility and repatriation and restoration. By involving family members and the community, Restorative Practices and RJ processes, where necessary, can harness the support and strength within the CICL’s ecosystem and thus promote the

principle of positive measures under Sec. 3(vii) of the JJ Act, 2015 and the principle of family responsibility under Sec. 3(v) of the JJ Act, 2015.

For Restorative Practices to be embedded in a CCI, efforts need to be made to work collectively in order to build a Restorative culture - i.e., attitudes, beliefs and practices that are based on values and principles enabling restoration of individuals to their best selves, and of relationships between individuals in the CCI.

This may be enabled by teaching Staff and children about Life Skills through Restorative Circles, and would include enabling staff and children to engage in conversations about strategies to handle stress, express emotions, handle conflicts, ways in which they engage in self-care, etc.

16 Rules 61(1)(3), sub-clauses (iii),(iv),(v) and (xiv), respectively of the JJ Model Rules, 2016.

17 See definition of Individual Care Plan, in Rule 2(1)(ix), JJ Model Rules, 2016.

### 1.3. Restorative Practices in Residential Institutions in other Jurisdictions

In 2002, the Hertfordshire County Council's Youth Justice and Children, Schools and Family services in the United Kingdom introduced restorative justice in four young people's residential units, including a home for children with disabilities.<sup>18</sup> The restorative processes included Circles with youth, as well as conferences. Mediation techniques were also implemented. Staff used both formal as well as informal approaches. The more informal approaches were termed as relational conflict resolution. Following the introduction of the programme, an assessment was conducted using focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with children and staff at the CCIs. Staff felt that formal restorative conferences were challenging with children who had "communication difficulties"<sup>19</sup> and/or a short attention span. Children and young people with attachment disorders also may not benefit from restorative conferences, and it is challenging to conduct RP with them.<sup>20</sup> According to staff statements, this is because RP/RJ requires a certain degree of empathy and bonding on the part of the young person who has caused harm, which may not be present in cases of young persons with attachment disorders.<sup>21</sup> However, children believed that RP/RJ is a beneficial way to deal with conflicts, improved anger management skills, increased empathy and accountability; it was noted that young people were able to understand and acknowledge the impact of their negative behaviour on other people, and the effect this had on the harmed person's feelings. Police call-outs<sup>22</sup> by the staff also reduced. This aspect was measured through a quantitative study, where police call-outs were measured before and after the implementation of RJ. Data shows that call-outs to the police reduced from 433 calls in 1999–2002 to 340 calls in 2002–2005.<sup>23</sup>

The Porto Alegre Programme in Brazil<sup>24</sup> uses Restorative Circles with children in CCIs. This programme is for CCL's engaging in violent conflict in the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil. Although it started as a pilot project in 2005, it is now an officially recognized programme of restorative justice within the Department of Education. It is funded through the National Fund for the Development of Education. It acts as a complement to the criminal justice system, and is also implemented at a post-sentencing/conviction stage. During this period, the judge and the public prosecutor may dialogue and create a plan for the CCL. The CCL has to live in a custodial institution and takes part in voluntary Restorative Circles. These Circles focus on the elements of "understanding, self-responsibility and compromise."<sup>25</sup> The participants in the circles were the CCL's, their

families and significant others, professionals, social workers, directors and workers at the CCIs. 92.7% of the cases ended with agreements which contained reparation agreements that were more symbolic and entailed taking self-accountability and tendering an apology, for example), rather than material reparations.<sup>26</sup> Recidivism rates reduced, post-release. Stakeholder satisfaction in the circles was 80%.<sup>27</sup>

Restorative Approaches are allowed during all stages of the justice system in 31 out of 32 local CCI's in Scotland.<sup>28</sup> Those services are provided by a number of different organisations including 17 by SaCRO (Safeguarding Communities Reducing Offending), 12 by local authorities and three by other organisations.

18 B. Littlechild & H. Sender, The introduction of restorative justice approaches in young people's residential units: A critical evaluation (2010). Retrieved from: <https://restorativejustice.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/The%20introduction%20of%20restorative%20justice%20approaches%20in%20young%20peoples%20residential%20units%20a%20critical%20evaluation.pdf>

19 Id (pp. 14).

20 Id (pp.57).

21 Id. (pp. 65).

22 In the context of the United Kingdom, the police are often called into residential units to address behavioural issues, conflicts and fights that may break out. These have been referred to here, as 'Police Call-outs'.

23 *Supra* n. 19.

24 D. Achutti & R. Pallamolla, Restorative justice in juvenile courts in Brazil: a brief review of Porto Alegre and São Caetano pilot projects. *Universitas Psychologica*, 11(4), (2012) 1093-1104.

25 Id, p. 1100.

26 Id, p. 1102.

27 Id.

28 F Dunkel, P. Horsfield, & A Parosanu, Research and Selection of the Most Effective Juvenile Restorative Justice Practices in Europe: Snapshots from 28 EU Member States. *International Juvenile Justice Observatory. Vol I.* (2015) p. 151. Retrieved from: [http://www.ejjc.org/sites/default/files/volume\\_i\\_-\\_snapshots\\_from\\_28\\_eu\\_member\\_states.pdf](http://www.ejjc.org/sites/default/files/volume_i_-_snapshots_from_28_eu_member_states.pdf)

Restorative Conferencing and values are used by prison staff as a non-punitive measure to address harm caused as a result of misconduct and bullying. Conferences and Circles are used to build interpersonal skills such as active listening, problem solving and democratic decision-making.<sup>29</sup>

The Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Project (IBARJ)<sup>30</sup> in the United States of America focuses on the use of Restorative Justice in the juvenile justice system. The project started in 2013 at the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Centre, and was then continued in four other CCIs. It prioritises three components for a 'balanced' approach- Accountability, Competency development and Community Safety.<sup>31</sup> Restorative chats, Restorative Conferencing, Circles for community building, problem solving and conflict resolution were also practiced. The culture of the juvenile centre improved, and tools were provided for building relationships and community, as well as other effective conflict resolution options.<sup>32</sup> CCLs had a better understanding of how their behaviour affects others, and teasing and harming their peers reduced, in a study conducted between 2015 and 2016.<sup>33</sup> Staff relationships with CCL's also improved. In another study conducted, it was found that recidivism had reduced and youth had a 40% lower likelihood of rearrests at 6-month follow-up.<sup>34</sup>

Formal restorative justice methods such as family group conferences are not always possible in CCIs. Thus, measures such as a "corridor conference", "restorative chat" or "restorative discussion" may be employed in certain circumstances.<sup>35</sup> Restorative Conferencing was initially introduced in care homes for children in early 2003 in the UK.<sup>36</sup> However, staff at the ISU (Intensive Support Units),<sup>37</sup> a Regional Care Centre (Glenmona Regional Care Centre) in Northern Belfast (Ireland) discovered that this more formal process was less useful as most of the incidents that required attention would flare up quickly and needed immediate attention. A cultural shift towards a more restorative mindset was required, one that would address the way in which young people interact on a regular basis, as well as interactions between staff and children. Less formal, in-house conferences were conducted to address any harms that the children may have engaged in. Following these restorative approaches, staff felt a sense of empowerment in having a large range of options to address challenging behaviours.<sup>38</sup> Young people started to take more responsibility for their own behaviours, and used restorative conflict resolution methods and trust increased between staff and children.<sup>39</sup>

## 1.4. Some Examples of Restorative Circles practiced in CCIs in India

Ashiyana Foundation has been facilitating Circles<sup>40</sup> with youths in various CCIs. These include Umerkhadi and

29 Youth Justice Services. (2008). Restorative Justice Services for children and young people and those harmed by their behaviour. Retrieved from: [https://lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/RJ\\_Services\\_for\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_and\\_those\\_harmed\\_by\\_their\\_behaviour.pdf](https://lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/RJ_Services_for_children_and_young_people_and_those_harmed_by_their_behaviour.pdf)

30 Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice Project. (2017) "Balanced and Restorative Justice for Juvenile Detention Centers: Improving Center Culture and Repairing Harms." An Implementation Model for Center Staff and Administrators. Retrieved from: [http://www.restorativejuveniledetention.org/uploads/1/0/6/5/106502445/jdc\\_implementation\\_model\\_july\\_2017\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.restorativejuveniledetention.org/uploads/1/0/6/5/106502445/jdc_implementation_model_july_2017_2_.pdf)

31 Id. (pp. 4)

32 Id. (pp. 6)

33 Id.

34 E McGarrell, Restorative justice conferences as an early response to young offenders. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (2001), p. 8. Retrieved from National Criminal Justice Reference Service website: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/187769.pdf>

35 W. McCarney, A restorative justice approach to working with children in residential care. *Law and Justice Review*, 1(1), (2010), pp.247-288.

36 Id. (pp. 254).

37 Successive Health and Personal Social Services Regional Strategies during the 1980s and 1990s aimed to enhance preventative and foster care programmes of intervention as alternatives to, and often at the expense of, residential care. As a result of this legacy of neglect and undervalue, the residential service had become, by the mid 1990s, a placement option of last resort for children. Intensive Support Units are thus care homes for children with 'complex needs' (high level behavioural challenges), who could not be placed in care homes.

38 *Supra* n.35 at 270.

39 Id. (pp. 271, 273).

40 For more information, see: <http://www.ashiyanafoundation.org/projects/#staffcircle>

Bhiwandi Observation Homes in Mumbai, as well as 11 CCIs in Chattisgarh and Jharkhand.<sup>41</sup> Ashiyana has been using weekly Restorative Circles to facilitate life skills, for reflection, and they have described these as a “way of life”<sup>42</sup> in OHs. Circles have been used to mark special occasions such as birthdays, where each participant is invited to share positive qualities about the person. ‘Craft Circles’ are also conducted twice a month in OHs. In these, children have an opportunity to learn origami, while the Keeper also shares information about life, values, and behaviour. Staff Circles are also conducted for mental health professionals. Here, a space is provided to share the challenges faced, learnings, as well as to support each other’s work. Using a narrative methodology, Ashiyana has measured the impact of their Restorative Circles. Children reported feeling accepted, learnt to trust, and developed socio-emotional skills. Children also developed a greater sense of accountability and empathy. One child talked about the impact of the harm that they committed, and mentioned that the person harmed may not be able to forgive him and accept his apology readily.<sup>43</sup>

Enfold Trust has been facilitating weekly Restorative Circles, both for children in need of care and protection (CNCPs) in Children’s Homes and children in conflict with the law in Observation Homes (OH) and the Place of Safety. These Circles are facilitated in person and online. In CCIs, Circles revolve around ideas of social emotional learning, self-awareness, relationships, anger management, and accountability. The aim of these was to provide psycho-social support to children, strengthen a sense of community and enable a deeper understanding of life skills through sharing of life experiences. A pilot project<sup>44</sup> was also started in Innisfree House School in 2019. 450 children from classes 3-9 in the Innisfree House school participated in Restorative Circles. The school adopted the Restorative Circle practice in 2019 to create safer spaces for students and staff to express themselves and to enable social emotional learning in their school community. Focus group discussions with the children and teachers at the end of the year revealed that relationships between teachers and children were strengthened, social and emotional skills were enhanced, and children expressed a greater sense of connection with their peers.<sup>45</sup>

During the pandemic, Enfold conceptualized and offered *Naanu Samartha* - an online life skills program through Restorative Circles for children released from CCIs, as well as children continuing to reside in CCIs. For more information refer to Section in Chapter 3. The impact of Enfold’s intervention in the CCIs was assessed through Focus Group Discussions and interviews of children who had attended at least three or more Circles or completed the *Naanu Samartha* program by independent consultants. Children reported feeling empowered and had developed social-emotional skills as well. Some level of trust was also built between Keepers and the children. Feedback from children in CCIs was also very positive. For instance, participants said, “We learned co-operation, friendship and togetherness”, “We are treated like equals, no one is big or small - everyone has a place to speak”, “If we are not talking to each other also, in the Circle I know they will listen to me. If there is any problem, I know that I will get my solution” and “We can share personal feelings that can be safe within the Circle”, pointing towards the several benefits of a Restorative Circle. In a focus group discussion following these Circles, boys in the Observation Home and Place of Safety reported several benefits of being a part of Restorative Circles. A child shared, “there is no judgement, one can speak from the heart and that everyone’s opinions are valued and respected”. Children felt heard and listened to.

One boy mentioned his favourite part about a Circle—”Talking about what makes one happy, and happy memories reminds me about my friends and family, and this makes me feel good; I feel less lonely.” Children also believed that they developed positive social and emotional skills. For example, one boy said, “The sharing during the Circle process has helped me develop positive thoughts and relationships with other boys which further helps me in controlling my anger.” Another boy said, “I realized how it feels when one hurts

41 Ashiyana. (2021). ‘Newsletter: Creating Safe Spaces for Children’.

42 Id.

43 Id.

44 Enfold Proactive Health Trust. (2020). *Life Skills through Restorative Circles: A collaboration between Enfold Proactive Health Trust and Innisfree House School Bangalore*. Retrieved from: <http://enfoldindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Life-Skills-Through-Restorative-Circles.pdf>

45 Id.

others and that one should not hurt others.”

Counsel to Secure Justice (CSJ), in collaboration with the Department for Child Rights, Government of Rajasthan and UNICEF Rajasthan, implemented a pilot project<sup>46</sup> for developing and rolling out restorative practices in Observation Homes. These OHs were selected in different districts such as Jaipur, Alwar, Ajmer, Jhunjhunu and Sikar. Restorative Circle processes were designed using tools for social emotional learning. 75 Circle processes were facilitated, with over 100 children in observation homes. Each Circle consisted of 7-13 participants. The aim of this was to provide a safe space for sharing, develop social emotional learning, empathy for harmed persons and their caregivers, fostering a sense of accountability and reducing bullying. CSJ has also been conducting victim support Circles, for children in need of care and protection, i.e., children who have been sexually harmed. These Circles involve the person harmed and their family or other support persons. The aim of these processes is to help people harmed explore the impact of the incident on them and discuss ways in which they need support. During the pandemic, virtual talking Circles with children were also conducted. These were weekly Circles with residents of shelter homes.<sup>47</sup> The impact of the pilot project in Rajasthan was assessed through Circle responses, professional development materials, participant observation notes of facilitators from each Circle, facilitator reflection checklists completed after each Circle, Circle questions on feedback from children at the end of each Circle, semi-structured interviews with children after each Circle; and Semi structured interviews with Master Trainers.<sup>48</sup> After the pilot project, children demonstrated improvement in their social emotional learning (on topics such as self-awareness, identifying a wide spectrum of emotions, bodily manifestations of emotions, etc). Self-management skills were also developed, and this included practicing mechanisms for coping with strong emotions such as anger, fear, etc. Social awareness increased as well- this included empathy for others, understanding social identities, and understanding prejudice.

## 1.5. Benefits and Challenges of Restorative Practices in CCIs

Restorative approaches have been seen to improve behaviour by improving relationships, have acted as an effective pedagogy for generating social-emotional skills and created emphasis on dialogue and empathy over retribution and ‘quick fixes’.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, RJ/RP promotes accountability for harms caused, and has also led to a reduction in instances of violence and bullying within institutional settings.<sup>50</sup> Restorative Practices are effective in promoting community building and a child-friendly, safe and positive culture within CCIs, by building the capacity to effectively respect, promote, protect and fulfil the right to safety and dignity of the children. It also equips the community (consisting of children and staff residing/working in the CCI) with the tools to address conflict when it arises.

46 Counsel to Secure Justice. (2020). *Bonds of Hope: Connecting to Children in the Observation Homes of Rajasthan*. Retrieved from: [https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020\\_Final-1.pdf](https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020_Final-1.pdf)

47 Counsel to Secure Justice. (2018). Perspectives on Justice: Restorative Justice and Child Sexual Abuse in India. Retrieved from: <https://nludelhi.ac.in/download/publication/2017/Perspectives%20of%20Justice.pdf>

48 Counsel to Secure Justice. (2020). *Bonds of Hope: Connecting to Children in the Observation Homes of Rajasthan*. (pp. 7). Retrieved from: [https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020\\_Final-1.pdf](https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020_Final-1.pdf)

49 Hansberry, B. (2016). A practical introduction to restorative practice in schools: Theory, skills and guidance. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. (pp. 27).

50 International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2011). SaferSanerSchools: Whole-School Change through Restorative Practices. Retrieved from: <https://www.iirp.edu/pdf/WSC-Overview.pdf>

Overall, several benefits were reported following the use of RJ/RP practices in CCIs. Some of these are mentioned below:

- Children were reported to have a greater sense of accountability and responsibility, and positive behavioural changes.<sup>51</sup>
- Participants in such processes also felt respect and heard.<sup>52</sup>
- Positive socio-emotional skills such as anger management, being able to identify emotions, etc., were reported.<sup>53</sup>
- Empathy, and positive relationship building also increased.<sup>54</sup>
- Persons harmed felt a sense of acknowledgement.<sup>55</sup>
- Children in conflict with the law felt that they had a greater sense of participation in the justice process.<sup>56</sup>
- Conflict resolution skills were also built, thus reducing levels of violence and bullying in CCIs.<sup>57</sup>

## Risks or challenges

- It has been argued that restorative justice has only a limited function with regard to children and young people with disabilities, and in particular those with developmental disabilities.<sup>58</sup>
- With younger children or children with attention disorders, formal restorative processes may be a challenge, due to low levels of attention.
- The power/control relationship between children in a CCI, who may be involved in bullying needs to be understood well, prior to a restorative process. For example, some ‘socially skilled’ bullies pretended to take responsibility and acknowledged that harm was committed during a Circle. They then went on bullying using fresh information that they gathered during a Circle process.<sup>59</sup>

## 1.6. Conclusion

RP/RJ processes in different contexts vary. While some programmes in CCIs rely on Restorative Circles, others may make use of Restorative Conferencing and Victim Offender Dialogues. The outcomes of these initiatives also vary across contexts and the stakeholders involved.

In this chapter, it can be seen that RP/RJ has been used in CCIs across India and the world, with largely positive outcomes. These changes have been seen across the board, with all stakeholders involved. This includes the CCLs, CNCPs, as well as the staff and larger community. RP/RJ as mentioned throughout the chapter, promotes a relational way of being, which improves behaviour and allows for a better understanding of interpersonal conflict resolution.

51 United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. 2011. *Promoting Restorative Justice for Children*. United Nations Publications. Retrieved from: <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/file/2180/download?token=JR94W53U>

52 Id.

53 B. Littlechild, Conflict resolution, restorative justice approaches and bullying in young people’s residential units. *Children & Society*, 25(1) 2011, pp.47-58.

54 Id.

55 Id.

56 Id.

57 Id.

58 Littlechild, B., & Sender, H. (2010). The introduction of restorative justice approaches in young people’s residential units: A critical evaluation.

59 *Supra* n.53.

## CHAPTER 2

### Key Elements of Restorative Circles

Since 2019, the Restorative Practices team (RP team), at Enfold Trust has facilitated nearly 200 Restorative Circles with children, adolescents, as well as adults. These Circles have been facilitated with children in Observation Homes, Children's Homes, children in the community, staff of Child Care Institutions,<sup>60</sup> and adult functionaries in the juvenile justice system - in person and online. The team has also conducted Reintegration Circles with children in the post-institutionalization stage, Restorative Circles for strengthening life skills in schools and training in restorative practices for staff of schools and CCIs. Every month, the entire team sits in a Restorative Circle, as part of ongoing praxis, strengthening our sense of community and our relationships with each other, while also sharing challenges faced and insights we have gained from our Circle practice.

This Chapter unpacks the elements of Restorative Circles and blends these with the experiences of Circle Keepers at Enfold Trust.

#### What do Restorative Circles mean for Circle Keepers in Enfold Trust?

“Restorative Circles are an inclusive way of connecting with people. It gives everyone an opportunity to participate and share their thoughts, feelings, and stories. It serves as a vehicle for deep learning and reflections.”

“Our Restorative Circles act as a space for participants to express their feelings and thoughts. It helps participants to explore their own abilities and strengths, and they also get a chance to learn from each other.”

“Circles are non-judgemental and experiential—this brings in self-reflection that may be crucial for healing and meeting needs.”

“I have been deeply moved by the sharing that has taken place in some of the Circles that I have facilitated and co-facilitated with children in the Observation Home, Bengaluru where I found trust building up and children feeling safe enough to be themselves and connect deeply with the Keepers and some of their fellow Circle members. I felt even more enthralled by the power of Restorative Circles, when young girls shared deep stories of their past experiences and how they have been able to navigate their relationships, despite the challenges they faced.”

The Restorative Circle is a tool, a space, and a process that facilitates self-awareness and helps build authentic value-based relationships. It gives participants an opportunity to express and reflect on emotions, thoughts, and experiences, and learn from the life lessons and wisdom shared, irrespective of age, class or any other differentiating factor, given the sense of community and shared humanity that is fostered. It is a space where we all learn from one another through the sharing of different lived experiences. The underlying belief is that we are able to connect better when we know ourselves and those with whom we share spaces at home, work, school, CCIs, or in the community. Circles enable participants to co-create and foster a welcoming and safe space that is collectively owned, for people to authentically share their feelings, life stories, how they are doing,

60 Child care institutions are residential facilities for children in conflict with law, and children in need of care and protection established under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

their fears, vulnerabilities and strengths, their hurt and the harm they may have experienced and/or caused.

While Restorative Circles are not the answer to all situations, they are being increasingly recognized as a powerful way to enable deeper levels of sharing, listening, empathy, learning, expressing support and compassion, and finding ways to collectively move forward in a good way. Participants talk about the subject by sharing experiences from their life. Those listening get a better understanding of the speaker's viewpoints and life. The feeling of being listened to with empathy and without judgement supports emotional expression and even a spiritual experience for those inclined. This in turn deepens the sense of connection and belongingness, that nurtures and nourishes the recognition of a shared humanity cutting across social barriers. Participants draw strength, support and wisdom from one's own and each other's lived experience and insights.

## 2.1. Key Principles

During the practice of Restorative Circles, the following principles are followed to help participants co-create a safe space:

- **Voluntary participation:** Restorative Circles are voluntary for all participants at every stage. Restorative Circles are voluntary for all participants at every stage. No one can be coerced, pressured, or induced by unfair means to participate. As a corollary, no-one should be censured or punished if they decide not to participate. Participants are encouraged to exercise their choice and to feel free to leave the Circle at any time, if they feel upset, triggered, unwell, uncomfortable, etc. It is believed that everyone is welcome in the circle and has something to offer. Agency of persons, including children and adolescents to decide whether they wish to participate is respected. They are encouraged to share based on their comfort levels and attend the Circle only if they wish. Voluntary participation becomes possible through trust-building, ensuring confidentiality, and demonstrating commitment to the values that the group agrees upon.
- **Values:** Values are used as bricks to help build a strong foundation for a safe space in the Circle for participants to express themselves comfortably, and share their own truths and personal stories without feeling judged by others. Without them, the Circle will not be a safe container to hold the emotions, experiences, and stories that are shared. The values are not imposed on participants by the Circle Keepers. Participants are invited to identify values that they need in order to feel safe and share freely and authentically in the Circle. The Circle Keepers then guide the group in arriving at a shared understanding of the meaning and implication of each value, and to arrive at a consensus on the values they can collectively commit to while participating in the Circle and it is this mutual agreement that makes the Circle a safe space. The values are revisited in every Circle even if after they have been agreed upon in the first Circle that the group has sat in.

## Of Values<sup>61</sup>

I sat down by the river  
One warm Sunday morning  
Looking at the gurgling river  
And the sparkling light on the water  
I pondered...  
What do I value?  
What are my values?  
What is value?  
As I looked at the water  
It seemed to be telling me...  
See how I run...  
I know what I want  
I know where I want to reach  
I also know how I want to reach  
I do not want to break stones  
I wind around them  
But still I keep moving  
How do I want to live my life?  
How do I want to get what I want to get?  
I want to be gentle  
I want to be enriching  
To those who come to me  
If I want to change the rocks  
I do it in a slow yet firm way  
They get rounded after years of my influence  
I want to go towards my destination  
Yet, in wanting to go  
I look to my values when I move  
On how I want to move  
My values are my template  
I keep going back to them  
Whenever I face any challenge on my way  
Because my values have moulded me  
To become who I am  
And I would not be water  
If I did not have these  
What are your values?  
What makes you you?  
What would make you not you  
If you did not follow them  
What would make you go further  
Away from your inner core  
If you did not refer to them?  
The glistening light on the water  
Suddenly brought out the light  
In my inner thoughts  
I am discovering my values  
I am aligning to my values  
Because....  
That is when I recognise myself.

- Malini Bharath

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61 Poem written by Malini Bharath, Restorative Practices Facilitator, Restorative Practices Team, Enfold Proactive Health Trust, for a Praxis Circle with the Restorative Practices team.

- **Equality:** Circles honour each participant equally and no person is more important than anyone else. This is practiced in the following ways:
  - The **Talking Piece** is a designated item picked up from a selection of personal items that hold meaning to participants or elements of nature, which are placed in the Centre. The Talking Piece is passed around the Circle in a particular direction - clockwise or anticlockwise.
  - Agency of participants, irrespective of age, is recognised and encouraged and it is clarified that there is no compulsion to speak. Participants are invited to share their thoughts, feelings and stories based on their comfort. Participants are informed in the beginning itself, that if they are uncomfortable sharing, they are welcome to pass the Talking Piece.
  - The Circle Keepers steer the Circle, but are equal participants, not experts. They too share responses from their own life experience. They invite all participants to co-create the values, and to own the space by sharing the responsibility to ensure adherence to values. The Keeper can of course facilitate the Circle participants in re-examining the space and in identifying additional values.
  - While the Circles are predominantly based on oral sharing, it is recognised that there are different ways of communication, especially among children with disability. For instance, many adolescent boys in CCIs found it easier to express their emotions through art. While facilitating a Circle in a Children's Home in Bangalore, a Keeper from Enfold observed that a child was hearing impaired and could not communicate orally. The child was encouraged to express her feelings and thoughts through art work and this helped enable her participation in the Circle.

## Voluntary Participation

Ensuring voluntariness can be challenging for Keepers and requires a conscious effort. While working in some CCIs, it was observed that children found it difficult to believe that they could actually walk out of a Circle if they felt like it, as they were used to a regimented way of life where they had to do what they were told. Girls in one CCI looked at the Keepers in shock when they were reminded that Circles were voluntary in nature, and that as long as they respected the values, if they were uncomfortable for any reason, including tension about upcoming exams, they could walk out of the room after excusing themselves. Similarly, if they were tired or sleepy, they could either relax and settle themselves in a more comfortable position, as long as it was not disrespectful. Initially, they thought the Keepers were being sarcastic, but gradually, realized that this was indeed true, and though they were 'in Circle', could relax and share more authentically, knowing that they were not being pressurized to be present, or sit in a particular way, etc.

## 2.2. Elements of a Circle

The elements of a Circle include the opening and closing ceremony, a Centre, and a Talking Piece. The ritualistic aspects of a Restorative Circle helps to attune the energy of the participants, and "...encourages people to drop the ordinary masks and protections that create distance from others."<sup>62</sup> Circle Keepers in the RP team have found it very helpful to personalise each of these elements depending upon the topic of a particular Circle. A participatory approach is taken while designing these elements, wherein the participants in the Restorative Circle are often entrusted with the task of preparing or bringing some of these elements.

**Keepers and Co-Keepers:** The Circle Keepers and Co-Keepers (also referred to as Facilitators and Co-Facilitators), 'keep' the space by keenly observing whether participants are feeling safe and comfortable, the Circle. They are equal participants, not experts, and although they take on the responsibility of planning the

62 Pranis, K. (2015). *Little book of circle processes: A new/old approach to peacemaking*. Simon and Schuster; 26.

Circle and the questions in the Rounds, they too share responses from their own life experience. They invite all participants to co-create values, and to own the space by sharing the responsibility to ensure adherence to them by encouraging each one to express themselves if their needs are not being met due to the non-adherence to values. The Keepers (and the participants too) can initiate a process of collective reexamination of the Circle space and whether any of the existing Circle values were being disrespected, and perhaps in identifying additional values that may need to be added too. Co-equalizing power and observing the Circle space for any bullying/teasing amongst children, or power dynamics amongst staff of the CCI is one of the key roles that Keepers must play.

## **Opening**

The opening of a Restorative Circle generally sets the tone for the process and marks the space apart. The purpose of an opening is to help the Keepers and participants transition into the Circle, become centered and grounded so that they may then be able to leave the distractions of the day aside, and focus so as to bring their 'whole' selves to the experience of the Circle. This is normally some form of mindfulness practice that enables participants to become more in tune with their bodies, minds and feelings, as well as the ambience of the Circle space itself.

### **Grand Welcome and Opening**

It was the first day of facilitating a Restorative Circle at the Children's Home for Girls in Bengaluru. The Circle Keepers planned a grand welcome for the children into the Circle. They reached the venue very early and created the Center with flowers and personal objects that children would find curious and interesting. With the help of the staff, all children were requested to form a long line just like the image of the train just outside their activity room. Children were curious and excited as to what was happening inside the activity room. Keepers came out of the activity room and announced that as soon as the music played, the children's trains would enter the activity room and form a circle around the center. It was exciting even for the Keepers and the staff as they joined the fun being a passenger on this train. The children, Keepers and staff formed a big circle around the Center, the music was then switched off and everyone sat down around the Circle.

Openings can include:

- inspirational quotes, poems, or songs aligned with the theme of the Circle;
- breathing exercises;
- instrumental or meditation music;
- moments of meditative silence.

In a Circle on 'Vision for a good life', a 14-year-old child in a Children's Home was energized when she heard a poem titled "[कोशशि करने वालों की](#)" by Sohan Lal Dwivedi, as she recalled hearing it when she used to attend school a few years back.

## **Centre**

A Centre is a crucial element in a Restorative Circle. It is not only the centre of the circle in which participants are seated, in an in-person Circle, it is also a space that can be co-created online as well. The Centre contains objects, values, and elements from nature that are of importance to the participants and/or hold some relevance

to the topic of a Circle. In some Circles, Keepers encourage participants to bring objects that have a special meaning attached to them and place it in the Centre (or briefly display it in an online Circle). The Centre often serves as an anchor that helps participants to focus and feel connected with the other participants.

Children and adults have found strength from the Centre, especially when the Restorative Circle is emotionally heavy, or when there are difficult moments.

Aside from the personal objects of value, the Centre can be put together with any material that is available. It could be:

- A piece of cloth or *dupatta*;
- Dried or fresh leaves and flowers;
- Lamps;
- It is an arrangement of special objects/cloth/elements from nature, etc., that are placed in the Centre of the Circle.

A Centre can also be created in online Circles through a collage of pictures that can be collected from participants in advance. Participants can also be invited to create their own Centre next to them, in the space where they are attending the online Circle.



Centre and Values in an Online Circle for Staff of Child Care Institutions, May 2020



Centre with Values in an Observation Home



Centre created outdoors for a Circle with staff of Children's Home



Personal Centre created by a participant of an Online Circle with Staff of CCI

## Talking Piece

The Talking Piece is any of the participant's special objects that are placed in the Centre, or which the Keeper or the children choose for the Circle. Children can be invited to pick the Talking Piece at the start of every Circle. Before using the object as a Talking Piece, the Keeper invites the person whose object it is, to share a story from their life about what the object means to them. The object is then respectfully passed around the Circle, from one participant to the next, with participants invited to use it in a manner that enables the holder to speak, while others listen with intent. Participants who do not feel like sharing are invited to accept the Talking Piece and pass it on to the next person in silence - without feeling compelled to speak. The Talking Piece equalizes power and enhances participation by ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to speak or express themselves. It also "slows the pace of conversation and encourages thoughtful and reflective interactions..."<sup>63</sup>

The agency of participants, irrespective of age or any other status, is recognised and encouraged. Participants are invited to share their thoughts, feelings and stories based on their comfort, and informed in the beginning of the Circle, that if they are uncomfortable sharing, they are welcome to pass it on.

For eg. one Keeper<sup>64</sup> used the piece of a broken tile as a Talking Piece for a Circle on Conflict Resolution. She shared a story about how this tile was part of the floor of a large ancestral home, and how real estate agents had lured one person within her extended family into a financial deal, which caused a huge conflict. After the beloved building was razed to the ground, the land was sold off in a distress sale, and the deep bonds between the three families were shattered. She shared about her happy childhood days spent playing in the garden, and the pain she felt about the broken relationships, depicted by the broken tile. She went on to share how, subsequently, despite the anger and pain, the families have gradually come together, because some members chose to come forward and initiate a peaceful resolution to the conflict, thereby enabling some healing to take place, and while talking about this, placed the other half of the tile together, demonstrating that with effort, conflicts can be resolved and the wounds could heal over time. The other participants resonated deeply with the story and the Co-Keeper highlighted how useful it had been as it had definitely set the stage and enabled deeper sharing during the Circle.

### For a Talking Piece:

- Participants may be invited to bring along an object that holds meaning for them, which can be used as a Talking Piece. They are invited to share a memory or story that will help everyone understand why the object is important to them. Any item placed in the Centre can be used as a Talking Piece.
- In online Circles, children in CCIs, who may not always have access to meaningful personal objects, can be invited to draw something that holds value for them, which they would like to use as a Talking Piece.
- Items such as a stress-ball, smooth pebble, feather, soft toy, etc., can also be used as a Talking Piece. When a stress-ball was used, a child observed that it helped her fidget with something while she was sharing something sensitive that made her feel vulnerable.
- Keepers may either choose a Talking Piece themselves from whatever is placed in the Centre, or may ask participants to suggest an item that could be used as well. It may be prudent to choose items that are more sturdy for Circles that are based on themes that are likely to trigger deeper emotions, as participants tend to hold onto the item and may damage a fragile one, that may hold precious memories for the person it belongs to.
- An interesting take on a Talking Piece (that is even COVID-19 appropriate) was when we asked children to turn to the person sitting next to them in the circle and say 'Namaskar' with their hands folded and a smile.

<sup>63</sup> Pranis, Kay. (2015). *Little book of circle processes: A new/old approach to peacemaking*. Simon and Schuster; 30.  
<sup>64</sup> This story has been shared with the consent of the Keeper.

## Making Talking Pieces

In a Children's Home for Girls, children were divided into groups of 3-4 and asked to think of a Talking Piece that they wish to use in the circle. Once the groups came up with their ideas, art materials such as handmade clay, craft paper, straws, colours, glitter were provided. The children worked together and transformed their ideas into Talking Pieces. Interestingly, when one group could not arrive at an agreement about what to create and were arguing among themselves, the Circle Keepers used it as an opportunity to steer the Circle towards a dialogue on conflict resolution.



Talking Pieces created by children in a Children's Home for Girls

In another Circle, a 'magic firework' kirigami object was used as a Talking Piece; all the participants collectively decided to name this piece '*roshni*' (a hindi word meaning 'light').

In online Circles, the Keepers can ask participants to number themselves as they enter the room or assign them numbers. This helps establish the order of speaking smoothly.

### Values

The heart of Circles are values that all participants agree to uphold during the Circle, to the best of their abilities. These values help create a safe container for the free and comfortable expression of emotions and stories from the heart. The term "value" may sound abstract to children and it can be difficult to convey to them what it means in the context of the Circle.

To help children understand and identify values for the Circle, the following methods adopted by the Enfold Team were effective:

**Values as Building Blocks:** Inspired by Jenga, on the day of the Circle on co-creating values, Keepers crafted blocks in the form of bricks from chart paper. The Keepers piled up the blocks one on top of each other, while the children curiously observed them. One Keeper pulled one of the blocks from the bottom and the

pile of blocks collapsed. The Keeper explained that the construction of a house is similar to that of the Circle space that is collectively co-created with each other. If we were to co-create values such as these bricks, and if one value is either disrespected or not even placed in the foundation- the entire Circle may then become weak and fragile. Values are the foundation on which participants in the Circles build a safe space in order to share freely from the heart. Therefore if the values are not protected the building would fall. This helped children understand what values are and they proceeded to articulate the values they wanted for their Circle. Once the values were agreed upon, and everyone expressed their consent to respect each one of them, they were written on these blocks and kept around the Center.



Values as building blocks in a Children's Home for Girls.

- Another method has been to ask children to think of a person with whom they could share their dreams, secrets, desires, happiness, sadness and everything under the sun! Once children think of this person, they are asked “What is it about this person that makes you feel comfortable to share everything with this person?” Through these responses, values were derived by the Circle-Keepers and the group.

## Where does love belong?

In a Circle on friendship with adolescent girls in a Children’s Home, an intense discussion broke out on whether “love” could be reintroduced as a value. A fight had broken out the previous week and the girls had decided that since they did not feel love towards each other, the value would have to be excluded. When the team sat down for the Circle, most of the girls announced that they wished to have “love” back as a value. One girl, however, objected stating that she could only “love” her parents and siblings and no one else. This posed an interesting situation for the Keepers as the majority wanted “love” back as a value. The children were invited to reflect on different types of love and the intensity of the emotion. After some discussion, the children finally agreed that friends could also be loved in a different way from family. ‘Love’ was then reintroduced as a value. Soon, however, the girls disagreed on the placement of the value, with some insisting that it be placed in front of them! The Co-Keeper promptly stood up and placed the value in the centre of the Centre, and the girls immediately agreed that this was exactly where love should be -as the Centre was a space that everyone connected to equally in the Circle.

### Check-in

Check-ins are usually open-ended questions that are designed to “relax the group and build universality among participants.”<sup>65</sup> Check-ins serve as ‘ice-breaking’ tools, and also act as a catalyst for the initial steps in a relationship-building process. In this stage, it may also be helpful to invite participants to introduce themselves, even if they are already familiar with one another. The Keeper could also facilitate a deeper Check-in by providing an opportunity for each participant to express authentically what they are feeling at that moment in their day, and thereby share a little part of themselves with the other participants. Check-ins can belong or short, light or deep, depending on the time constraints, the level of trust in the Circle, and the theme for the Circle. Check-ins help everyone in the Circle to get a sense of what other participants in the Circle are feeling or carrying into the Circle, and therefore provides an opportunity for participants to also respond to the needs that may be expressed at this time, during the sharing that takes place subsequently in the Rounds.

Check-in questions can be:

- How are you feeling today?
- Draw and share with us what you are feeling today.
- Is there anything you feel that is important for the group to know?
- How are you feeling? If you were an animal, what animal would best describe how you are feeling?
- Please draw an outline of a heart. Now, fill it with drawings and colours of what is in your heart today.
- How are you feeling today? Think of a song that represents who you are and what you want from life? Do sing a few lines from it, if you are comfortable?

## Experience of Framing Check-in Questions and responding to the sharing of the participants

Keepers need to be sensitive while framing Check-in questions. In a children's Circle, when the Keeper asked how they are feeling, a few children responded saying "why do you always ask about our feelings when you know we are not okay being in the CCI?". Hence, the Keeper had to improvise the question to ask, "How are you feeling right now, sitting in the Circle?" Another improvisation has been "Use an action, a facial expression or a body movement to share how you are feeling today."

Keepers need to keenly listen to, and assess the intensity of feelings expressed by the children during the Check-ins, by taking note of verbal and non-verbal cues. In one Circle, when a few children expressed that they were not feeling alright, before proceeding further, the Keeper said, "Given that now you have heard the feelings of the participants, please spend a moment in silence and think about one or two participants whose needs you may want to respond to during the Circle process."

### Question Rounds

The question rounds help participants engage with, and reflect upon the theme chosen for the Circle. This is one of the central elements of the Circle, one that often takes up the most time. Questions are open-ended and invitational, they draw upon real life stories and emotions and not on cognitive theorizing. These are questions or reflective statements that the Keepers normally plan in advance, based on the theme identified for the Circle, and ask one at a time, inviting the participants to share. **The Keepers always answer the questions first to model the depth of the Circle and the nature of response.** Listening closely when in a Circle, the Keeper and Co-Keeper take a moment to quietly assess whether the group needs another round on a specific issue, based on what is arising in the group. They could either frame a question and ask it, or even invite the participants to collectively decide what question they would like to use for another round that best meets the needs of the group.

The prompts are usually light-hearted at the beginning of the Circle, during the trust-building stage. Children are asked questions that they feel comfortable answering, without any fear of being ridiculed or judged for their responses.

#### Examples of such questions are:

- Share with us your favourite actor/sports person and what you like about them.
- If you could rename yourself, what name would you pick?
- If you had a super power what kind of a power would that be? What would you do with this power?
- If you were given an entire day to do whatever you wanted with no restrictions or instructions, what would you do?
- Tell us about your favourite film and why you like it.
- If there is one thing you had to eat for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you had to keep only three apps and delete everything else on your mobile phone, what would they be?
- If you could live anywhere on this planet where would you choose to live, and why?
- Would you rather take a bath in tomato rasam or ice cubes?
- Would you rather have idli with icecream or maggi noodles with bassaru?
- Would you rather live in a place somewhere very hot or in a place somewhere very cold?
- Would you rather be able to read minds or be invisible?

- Would you rather sing to music or dance to music?
- Would you rather live under water or live in the clouds?

As the trust and sense of community is strengthened over a few Circles with the same group, the themes and questions change. The prompts then involve questions that enable deeper sharing. In general, the prompts range from a light 'head question', to a feeling/heart centred question, and then a deeper reflective question. Conversations about relationships and emotions can be quite vague and complex. Keepers have come up with innovative ideas to help children engage with certain complex topics. For eg. in a Circle on relationships, children were invited to sit in pairs and share with each other, what they think are the important ingredients required for a healthy relationship and what are the behaviours and actions in these relationships that make it healthy? They were given the analogy of baking a cake or making payasam, a traditional south Indian sweet.

## Exploring Conflict Resolution Strategies through Circle

A Circle on conflict resolution, began with the check-in question, 'How are you feeling today? Use a feeling word that is different from one you would normally use'. The 'Emotions Wheel' was displayed and participants were encouraged to expand their vocabulary in terms of 'feeling words'.

Following this, the children were asked, 'What are some feelings you might have when you disagree with someone? How do they show up in your body?'. The question in the second round was "What changes in a conflict when you place yourself in the shoes of the person you are having conflict with?" The question in the third round was - "Share a strategy you can use when you want to peacefully disagree or end a conflict peacefully? If you are comfortable, share a story when you may have used this strategy." Keepers and children both shared stories that helped everyone reflect on the conflicts they had experienced, the strategies that they themselves use during conflicts, and to learn new ones from the stories shared by others.

In one setting, a child felt comfortable to share a story about a live conflict with a friend within the CCI. It was heartwarming to see how the two friends used the Circle space to share their thoughts and feelings about the conflict and get a better perspective of what the other person was thinking and feeling about it, thereby enabling them to work through the conflict during the Circle itself. See the template for this Circle on Conflict Resolution in Chapter 4.

In this way, Keepers encourage participants to share stories of courage, agency and resilience towards the end of the Circle, so as to empower the participants to draw from their own inner resources while drawing strength from life-skills demonstrated by others in the Circle, all of which are likely to generate a sense of hope. As a closing, a short and light-hearted animated video about resolving conflict was shown, which the participants related to very well.

### Check-out

The Circle Keepers ask a Check-out question to enable participants to share how they are feeling at the end of the Circle. This helps the Keepers to get a better understanding of how each participant is doing at this time, and whether or not the Keepers need to provide additional support to anyone after the Circle. Keepers could also invite participants to share the insights they derived from the Circle, which in turn helps the participants to share and draw from the wisdom that has been co-created together.

## Check-out questions could be:

- How are you feeling after the Circle?
- In one word, share how you are feeling after the Circle?
- Share with us something new you learnt about yourself from this Circle experience.
- Share with us something new you learnt from someone else's sharing in the Circle today.
- Share in a few words what you learnt from today's Circle.
- Draw something which helps us to understand how you are feeling now.
- What would you like to say to each other, knowing that we shared difficult things today?"

## Closing

A Closing marks the end of the group's time together in Circle, as it "reminds people of their interconnectedness, and emphasizes positive potential."<sup>66</sup> It is ideally something that is positive and uplifting - and can be affirmations, a secular prayer, a physical movement, inspirational poem or a popular song sung together. Closings convey a sense of hope for the future and prepare participants to return to the space of their daily lives.

The Closing may include:

- quotations, poems, songs or video clippings that resonate with or summarize key insights / core messages on the theme of the Circle;
- breathing exercise or mindfulness practice;
- relationship building exercise;
- art;
- Collaborative art on a whiteboard during online Circles.
- origami;
- Squash Painting;



Collaborative art as closing in an online Circle with staff of CCIs

## **Experience of Adolescents residing in Child Care Institutions**

“The first time the Circle was held, I sat feeling very scared, I thought it was an interrogation just like the police had conducted with us earlier. I thought, people are going to trouble us again. Hence I did not speak much at all. When the Circle progressed, then I realised that this was a different kind of conversation, where we spoke about ourselves and our lives. It made me feel good and comfortable.”

“What I liked best was that they enquired with us and discussed with us about how we were when we were outside, how we are now and what kind of person we want to be when we go out of the Observation Home. I want to go and join my brother and father in their work, they run an independent business.”

“In the Circle I can show my feelings that I have from so many days.”

“I can talk freely and not be scared. I feel confident.”

“We can be united to respond and help when others feel emotional and blank.”

“I like that we are asked how we are feeling at the start of the Circle.”

“We are treated like equals, no one is big or small - everyone has a place to speak.”

“We can share personal feelings that can be safe within the circle.”

Creating art using Squash painting was used as a closing in circle on “Self Awareness - Exploring my Strengths” Children were provided with art material and asked to choose colours of their choice and splash it on the paper and fold it and press it or spread it and then to open the paper to see some beautiful creation of art. Children were asked to hold it up, show it to the participants in the circle and share what they see as the output of their creation and reflect on their own skills and what they can create of it.



The Keepers and children came together to make the personal objects to place in the center with paper origami butterflies in a Circle conducted in an open space.



Paper Origami of “Finger Emoji” were prepared for those who wish to express emotions in other ways, other than sharing verbally . Children wrote down the emotions in the form of emojis and words to share their emotions. These emotions were glued to the chart paper along with empty ones and a pen was made available for children to put out their emotions as and when they used the activity room. Paper Origami of Diyas

## Memorable Closings

A Circle on “Acceptance” was facilitated by two Keepers with children in the age group of 6-11 years in the Children’s Home just before the lockdown was announced. For the closing, all the participants were invited to take an oath of acceptance. Each one had to put their hand out in the center and the order of sharing had to say:

“I am (name). I am (mention something that other people may not accept or like about you - ex. because they are thin, dark, fat, don’t smile, fight) . Do you accept me in this circle?”  
and the response to this was  
“Yes (name) we accept you in this circle, Yay”



Another memorable Closing was when participants turned towards the persons on their right and left and shared words of appreciation for one another. As they did this, they also tied the ends of pieces of coloured ribbons (that they were previously given) to that of the ribbons of the person sitting on either side, creating a circle of coloured ribbons . This circle of ribbons was then held by all the participants and reverently placed around the Centre, symbolizing the connection between participants, and between the participants and the universe, represented in the elements of nature placed within the Centre.

\*\*\*\*

At the end of one Circle designed on the theme of working in teams and creative thinking, the children were invited to play the Human Knot game<sup>67</sup>, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Numerous insights were drawn out from the game that helped them to connect to the theme. After that, coloured strips of paper were distributed to the children, and they were requested to write their name on it and decorate it. Then using a stapler, participants were invited to make a paper chain, by stapling their strips around the strip of the participant sitting next to them. The chain was then placed in the Centre and after the Circle, the children requested that it be hung up on the wall to cherish the memory of the connections made.

67 See - <https://icebreakerideas.com/human-knot/>

## CHAPTER 3

# Facilitating Life Skills through Restorative Circles

This Chapter presents the experience of facilitating Restorative Circles with children to build an understanding of life skills. It specifies the process followed by the team to develop and facilitate Circles. Enfold Trust's unique online programme - "Naanu Samartha" (translated from Kannada as 'I am capable') launched during COVID-19 is explained. The Chapter also contains insights on the transformational possibilities of Restorative Circles based on feedback of the children collected through Focus Group Discussions and interviews by external consultants. It also captures the impact the process has had on the Circle Keepers, the challenges they faced and tips on what they felt worked well.

### 3.1. Restorative Circles as a vehicle for strengthening Life Skills

The sharing that takes place in a Restorative Circles enables positive changes in a person's behaviour and attitudes. The experience of the Enfold team reveals that Restorative Circles are an effective medium to facilitate personal transformation, discussion, reflection and learning of life skills such as self-awareness, recognising and expressing emotions, conflict resolution, gender and sexuality, decision-making, problem solving, and interpersonal relationships. Restorative Circles help co-create a space together with children and adolescents where self-reflection and deep sharing is possible. It offers a safe space for expression of views, exchange of stories, and helps unpack emotions as well. In such a setting, a variety of experiences, perspectives, and insights also become available to persons participating in a Circle. Compared to a traditional model of an instructor and participant, in Circles the Keeper is also a participant. Children are not told what they should do, but are encouraged to listen to the wisdom shared by other participants and to also share from the heart, their own life experience and insights. The Check-out along with a question framed in a manner to understand the key take-aways, helps to gauge what the children have absorbed.

Facilitating reflection on these life skills in Circles is especially helpful, as children are able to identify and recognize that they possess many of these skills already. The Circle prompts are designed to help children and the Keepers to collectively reflect on and share about themselves and how they navigated various life situations from the lens of life skills. Using Restorative Circles to facilitate life skills has impacted children in a positive manner. Circle Keepers were able to observe how children were able to identify and talk about various life skills. For example, a Circle with adolescent girls on a vision for a good life, helped them articulate their goals, the steps they need to take and the support they needed to achieve their goals. The sharing by some of the children, helped other girls to connect with and draw insights for their own lives.

Restorative Circles have served as an effective tool to enable deep reflection on life experiences, perspectives, and attitudes. For instance, in a Circle on Happiness and Empathy, a group of boys alleged to be in conflict with law shared about a time they felt happy and then also reflected on a time when they felt happy, but it also caused harm or difficulty to another person.

Trust between the children in one CCI and the Keepers built up significantly as the Circles were being facilitated regularly on a weekly basis. Participants felt comfortable to share experiences of broken relationships, of violence faced at home or from teachers in school, about their dreams and their weaknesses too, and to share how they faced these challenges. Keepers modelled deep sharing by telling stories from their personal lives, and about how they are also still strengthening their life-skills - a life-long process. This helped the children to connect more deeply with the Keepers, and also to equalize the power, as children were able to see that the Keepers too had their own share of vulnerabilities and work that they still had to do on themselves as adults.

समय

समय एक ऐसा है

समय एक वैसा है

जा रहा है वह बड़ी तेज़ी से

आ रहा है वह बड़ी तेज़ी से

समय समय, सुनो समय

कहीं खुशी ले आता है तो कहीं गम ले आता है

वो समय क्या समय है?

समय वो है जो कहीं सेकंडो में, तो कहीं मिनटों में

तो कहीं घंटों मैं तो कहीं दिनों में चलता है

समय तेरी कोई सीमा नहीं

समय समय, सुनो समय

आ रहा है वो बड़ी तेज़ी से, समय

### Time

Time is this

Time is that

It's going at great speed

It's approaching at great speed

Time! Time! Listen, Time

It brings joy, but brings grief somewhere

That time, what time is it?

Time is that which moves in seconds somewhere,

somewhere in minutes - somewhere in hours,

yet somewhere in days.

Time - you are limitless

Time! time! - Listen time

Its approaching very fast, time

- Poem by a child residing in an Observation Home for nearly three years.

## 3.2. Process for Facilitation of Restorative Circles

1. **Needs Assessment:** A needs assessment was carried out by the Enfold team to better understand the context within each CCI, before initiating Restorative Circles with the children and staff. This enabled the Keepers to become more conscious of the profile of the staff and children in terms of age, language, educational status, disability if any, as well as their routines and preferred timings for the Circles. Given the different kinds of CCIs, the Keepers also needed to take into account the duration of stay of the children in the CCI. For eg. Circles in Observation Home would need to take into account the reality that there is a high turnover of new children getting into the home, and children getting released on bail, whereas some children are languishing there for months.

2. **Preparatory work:** All Restorative Circles require prior preparation, and so each Circle is carefully curated. Additionally, the order of topics for each subsequent Circle is planned in such a way that challenging issues are discussed only after a certain degree of trust and sense of community is built amongst all the participants and Keepers. Attention is also given to the framing of the questions/prompts in each round of the Circle, ensuring that the right words are used, bearing in mind the age and literacy of the participants, as well as the different needs and vulnerabilities within the group. The questions are workshopped by the Keepers and then reviewed by another team member before the Circle is facilitated to ensure that they can be understood clearly by the children in the local language and that they do not exclude anyone in the Circle. For instance, while preparing for a Circle on how to deal with stress, the prep revealed that the options identified by the Keepers such as eating an ice-cream, taking a walk or listening to music could be viewed as insensitive and far removed from the reality of children in CCIs. Options available and relatable to the children had to be identified, while also ensuring authenticity on the part of the Keepers. Care is taken to ensure that nuances are not lost during translation and the questions remain clear. A part of the planning is also to remember to be flexible and be present to the needs of the children. There have been numerous occasions when the plan had to be set aside to respond to the feelings or needs expressed by the children during the Check-in.

3. **Physical arrangements:** Attention is also given to the physical arrangement of the room, and the seating of the participants whether it is a Circle that is in person or online. For Circles facilitated in person, Keepers with the help of the children themselves clean the room, prepare the Centre, make arrangements for participants to sit in a circle on the floor or on chairs with no tables or barriers in between. The physical format of the Circle enables every person to be seen, heard and respected. It symbolizes shared leadership, equality, connection, and inclusion. It also promotes focus, accountability, and participation from all.

Material that is needed for activities (such as art, ice-breaking games, etc.) that may be conducted during the Circle are also organized in advance. While Circles are predominantly based on oral sharing, Keepers have recognized that there are different ways of communication, especially with different age groups and with persons with disability. For instance, many adolescent boys in CCIs found it easier to express their emotions through art. In a Children's Home, a Keeper observed that a child was hearing impaired. Since she did not know sign language, and neither did the Keepers, she was encouraged to express herself through art-work. This enabled her to feel that she was seen, heard and honored in the Circle.

4. **Internal Protocol:** The Restorative Practices team prepared a set of guidelines to inform the intervention in CCIs in consultation with staff of the CCIs, Child Welfare Committee Members, mental health practitioners, and organisations working in CCIs. It sets out the guiding principles, key approaches and strategies, and the process for pre-Circle preparation, factors to be borne in mind by the Circle Keepers, while preparing for Circles, as well as during and after the Circle.

5. **Adoption of a Trauma-informed Approach:** Special care is taken while designing and facilitating Restorative Circles, to ensure that these are trauma-aware. Since the sharing in Circles may often revolve around topics that are sensitive or triggering, children are requested to share something that is not triggering. An analogy that is sometimes used to help children decide what to share is—"if your response feels like a fresh wound, one that may still be bleeding and hurts, try not to share this. If it feels more like a scar, one that is still visible, but doesn't hurt, share that." The children are assured that the Circle is a safe space, and they can definitely express any strong emotions that they feel at any stage. The Keepers also avoid making any startling movements or sudden loud noise. Trauma-responses may manifest as hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance as well, and a conscious effort is made to avoid triggering

these for the children.”

6. **Core Guidelines and Values:** In each Circle, values and guidelines are emphasized to ensure that a safe space is created and sustained throughout. Participants are invited to identify values that they need participants to adhere to, in order to feel safe and share freely from the heart, and to listen from the heart too. Keepers guide participants in arriving at a shared understanding of the meaning and implication of each value, and arrive at a consensus on the values they can collectively commit to while participating in the process. It is this mutual agreement that makes the Circle a safe space. Without them, the Circle will not be a safe container to hold the emotions, experiences, and stories that are shared. The Keepers never impose values on participants. The values are revisited in every Circle even if after they have been agreed upon in earlier Circles. They are also re-visited during the Circle itself, in case of breach - and participants are invited to speak up if they feel a value has been breached, in a restorative manner without blaming anyone, but rather sharing how that breach resulted in making the space unsafe for her/him/them. The shared values and co-ownership of the Circle space is crucial for enabling participants to share deeply and authentically.



**Centre, values, and guidelines in a Circle in the Children’s Home**

In addition to the values of the Circle, the Enfold team has adopted the following four Guidelines from [Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles](#) in our Circles with children - speak from the heart,

listen from the heart, trust that you will know what to say, without feeling rushed, say just enough.<sup>68</sup> For a detailed explanation of the guidelines refer to the template on Circle on Community-building. The Guidelines serve as a useful frame to encourage and assure the participants to be themselves and not feel pressured to impress anyone, while also being sensitive to the needs of the other participants, thereby enabling a meaningful Circle experience for all.

7. **Emphasizing voluntariness:** The voluntary nature of Circles, the importance of listening and speaking from the heart, empathy, etc., are always mentioned and gently reiterated, when appropriate. The agency of participants, irrespective of age or any other status, is recognised and encouraged. Participants are invited to share their thoughts, feelings and stories based on their comfort, and it is reiterated that if they do not feel like sharing, they are welcome to pass the Talking Piece. This is reiterated especially when other children nudge or ask a child to speak.
8. **Ensuring Safety:** While planning the Centre and Talking Piece, care is taken to ensure physical safety of the children. Accordingly, no pointed/sharp objects, lamps or candles are used. Equal care is taken to ensure children's psychological safety. Keepers remain vigilant to keenly observe the verbal and non-verbal communication of all the participants, so as to pick up on whether anyone is getting triggered, or requires emotional support. For Circles held in person, the Keepers spend some time with the children after the Circle, and subtly reach out to those who may need to feel supported. The Team also identified trained counsellors whose services can be called upon if any child requires urgent attention. An internal protocol to guide the Keepers in facilitating Circles, was developed, which stated -  
“In keeping with Section 3(vi), JJ Act, 2015, measures shall be taken by Enfold to ensure that the participants in Restorative Circles are safe and are not subjected to any harm, abuse or maltreatment while participating in the Circle process. In a situation referred to in Exception 1 of para 3 above, the Enfold facilitator/s will consult with the team and arrange for an immediate referral to an appropriate service provider, either within or outside the CCI.”
9. **Ensuring confidentiality:** Confidentiality is a key value that is introduced in the Circle to ensure that children feel safe and comfortable while sharing their personal stories. The Keepers ensure that sharing or information that emerges from a Circle is not conveyed in any reports or submissions to the officials or donors. The only exception is if a child shares suicidal ideation or self-harm behaviour during the Circle. The Enfold team created a protocol in advance to respond to such situations, which also entails taking the child's consent and seeking their cooperation before a staff member or service provider is alerted.
10. **Integration of Activities:** Restorative Circles with children also involve the use of energizers/activities, in order to ensure that the children are engaged and the energy levels are calibrated as per need. Circle prompts may therefore be interspersed or integrated with carefully planned art-based activities, music, videos and games chosen with a specific purpose in mind, which blends well with the mood, given the chosen theme. Since children were coping with online classes for most of the day in one CCI, the Keepers decided to end every Circle with a short Bollywood song played on Youtube, after the Check-out. Care was taken to ensure that this content was age-appropriate. Children looked forward to these few moments of connection through a fun activity, especially after a Circle that may have been a little heavy. Rangoli powder was taken for one Circle, and the children were delighted to express themselves through this, drawing various forms to personalize the decorative elements in the Centre. Activities are also adapted to make it more accessible to children. For a list of activities refer to Enfold's publication [Facilitation of Life Skills in Child Care Institutions in times of COVID-19 and beyond - A Handbook for Staff and Volunteers.](#)

68 Amos Clifford, *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*, available at, p.16, <https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/RP%20Curriculum%20and%20Scripts%20and%20PowerPoints/Classroom%20Curriculum/Teaching%20Restorative%20Practices%20in%20the%20Classroom%207%20lesson%20Curriculum.pdf>

**11. Customizing activities:** Efforts are made to customize activities so that children can relate to them. For instance, in a Circle on recognising triggers for anger and tools for dealing with it, the team replaced the oft used anger iceberg metaphor/visual, which children may not relate to, with a pressure cooker to convey the idea that there may be several unmet needs and feelings, not visible on the surface, which lead to an outburst. Refer to Chapter 4 for the template on the Circle on Recognising and Regulating Anger.

### **“Rajni, Darshan, Vijay” - An Indian version of Zip Zap Zop!**

In a training on Restorative Justice, organised by Ashiyana and Ahimsa Collective in Panchgani in 2019, the team was introduced to an energetic game called “Zip Zap Zop”. When the team introduced it to the boys in the Observation Home, their response was lukewarm. We noticed that the hesitation to play was because the boys found it hard to pronounce the words, (as the letter ‘z’ is sometimes pronounced through the use of the letter ‘g’ or ‘s’ in some languages). The team decided to swap the words with actors the boys liked. This innovation worked like magic, and the game was a huge hit!

The integration of activities into the Circle provides children a momentary break from their worries and stress. For instance, during the start of a Restorative Circle on “Coping with Anger”, a boy walked in sobbing quietly, as he had been denied bail by the Juvenile Justice Board. One of the Keepers asked him if he would like to return to the dormitory. He chose to remain in the Circle and was among the last three players in the adapted version of Zip Zap Zop! The Circle also gave him an opportunity to share his feelings with the group, and receive the empathetic responses of the participants who shared similar hopes of being released on bail.

**12. Ensuring that the Circle ends on an empowering note:** Due attention is given to design Circles so as to enable the strengthening of a sense of shared humanity and solidarity, and the sharing of life-lessons that could serve as a resource for other participants. Given that the children residing in CCIs hail from vulnerable backgrounds, and may not always have safe and trusted adults whom they could seek timely support or assistance, care is taken to enable children to believe in themselves and hold onto hope. Keepers encourage participants to share stories of courage, agency and resilience towards the end of the Circle, so as to empower the participants to draw from their own inner resources, while drawing strength from life-skills demonstrated by others in the Circle.

**13. Imbibing Restorative Values and Self-Care:** Restorative Practices requires a paradigm shift in the way that one thinks, feels, and also in the way in which one communicates with oneself and others. Though some Keepers have some skills in working with people, almost all realized that they still had a lot of work to do in terms of working on themselves, mindfulness practice and their need for additional self-care. During debriefs after Circles, Keepers would share how they were triggered by a participant’s sharing, and needed to take a moment to ground themselves. The team therefore increasingly realized that it is essential to provide safety through grounding and containment skills. Praxis Circles and follow-on discussions often focussed on reflective activities and sharing on questions related to self-care practices that worked for each one in the Circle. These include - “Share one thing that you really need at this time, a need that could perhaps be met by us in this team?”<sup>69</sup>; “What are some things you

<sup>69</sup> Question used for Praxis Circle held on 23 April 2020, a month after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared.

can do to manage your worries constructively?" and "What is something that you can offer when you see someone in the team who is worried?"<sup>70</sup> These efforts helped to enhance self-awareness on the need for boundaries, self-preservation and deepening resiliency. Training on Trauma Informed Practice was also conducted for the team, to help deepen understanding of trauma, and the recognition of the need for greater awareness of one's needs, emotions, strengths and limitations; how one could attain a better balance in terms of work, leisure time, and rest; and how connections to ourselves, to other team members, to others in our personal lives, and to the wider universe could be strengthened and deepened. Team members were provided an option to avail of professional mental health services and professional supervision, as a perk offered as part of the official policy adopted by the organization.

14. **Team spirit:** Attempts are made to celebrate occasions, plan potlucks, and connect to play games online during the pandemic so as to strengthen the bonds between team members. Keepers are encouraged to reach out for assistance from their Co-Keeper, should they feel in any way unable to facilitate a Circle for any reason. There is an understanding that Circles are never to be facilitated just for the sake of timely project outputs, and that they could either be delayed or postponed to a time when they could be facilitated meaningfully.
15. **Capacity Building:** The RP Team consciously designs its programs and projects in a manner that enables the team members to block time and resources for capacity building on Restorative Justice. Accordingly, resource persons from USA, Canada, Australia, Hungary and around India have been invited to share their wisdom with the team. Most of these programs have been opened out to RJ practitioners around India, and to those who may be interested in learning more about it too. Team members are encouraged to also enrol in online courses/webinars on Restorative Practices, resulting in some sitting in on sessions by resource persons at all hours of the night, given the varying time zones.
16. **Working with Staff of CCIs:** The team believes that it is important to orient and train the Management and the entire staff of the CCI as well as all other service providers working within the CCI to Restorative Practices, as this helps everyone to develop a shared vision of what they envision as a child friendly CCI within which a Restorative culture is embedded. The design of the capacity building program for staff of CCIs includes experience of Circle and understanding the value of each of the Circle elements, sensitizing participants on Emotions, on the Social Discipline Window and the need to equalize power, presenting evidence of positive Restorative Justice outcomes in CCIs from across the world, and sharing examples of how Restorative Practices are used in various settings.

The team avoids blaming any staff for lacunae in managing the CCIs during the Circles. Keepers also maintain confidentiality as regards what was shared in the Circle, and report child rights violations and abuse of children to concerned authorities, in discussion with the child. For instance, in one interaction, children shared about the disrespectful and stigmatizing language used against them by one staff member. After taking consent from the children, the Keepers then spent time with this particular staff separately, first enquiring about their own well-being given the challenges related to work in this setting. After establishing some rapport with her, the staff was asked about this complaint. The staff member admitted that this was indeed the case. Though she initially vented her frustration about her work given the large number of vacancies and poor staff-child ratio, the large number of boys, and the behaviour of the boys, the staff member gradually recognized that this was only generating further anger in the children to whom she owed a duty of care to. Though ideally it would have been best if the staff member could be brought into the Circle to enable conversations about what had happened, unmet needs and ways in which both the children and staff could move forward in a good way, this was not considered wise at the time, as the Circles with the staff had not yet begun.

## 17. Strengthening muscles in Keeping Circles

- **Praxis:** The Enfold Restorative Practices team embraced the idea that Circle Keeping is a way of life, not

70 Question used for Praxis Circle held on 1 December 2020.

a program. Accordingly monthly Praxis Circles were designed, to enable team members to reflect deeply about themselves as persons while sharing their experience of Circle Keeping, including the insights they gained about themselves, what they believe they need to work on in order to bring their best selves forward and serve as better Circle -Keepers, etc. For eg., one question in a Praxis Circle<sup>71</sup> was - “What element of nature do you identify with and why? What does this say about you as a person?” Another Praxis Circle theme was focussed on expectations from colleagues and co-Keepers.<sup>72</sup>

- **Debriefs:** Debriefing was introduced as a necessary aspect of Circle Keeping that needed to be done after every Circle with the Co-keepers. This practice helps Keepers check-in with each other and share what went well, and what could be done differently next time. It also helps to identify support that may be required for oneself so as to be more present as a Keeper in subsequent Circles. Giving honest feedback and receiving feedback with humility and openness helps Keepers become more aware of their strengths and limitations, and also the need to sharpen skills in particular aspects of Circle Keeping. Keepers have often nudged each other, pointing out how a tone of voice or demonstration of authority, shifted the power in the Circle towards the Keeper, resulting in the Circle turning out to be more a ‘lecture’ rather than a democratic space in which everyone shares their own wisdom.

### 3.3. Restorative Circles during COVID-19 through “Naanu Samartha”

The COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020 brought Enfold’s Restorative Circles in two government-run CCIs to an abrupt and grinding halt. The Supreme Court’s order<sup>73</sup> directing Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and Child Welfare Committees to proactively consider releasing children from CCIs resulted in many children in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection being released to their families. From May 2020, the Restorative Practices team began following up with 15 boys alleged to be in conflict with law and became more deeply aware of the severe impact of the lockdown on them and their families. It was clearly evident that they were moving from situations of unmet needs and vulnerability, the stigma of alleged crime, the negative effect of institutionalization and frayed familial relationships to situations of further psycho-socio-economic risk.

During the individualized follow-up calls, the team sensed deep frustration and restlessness among the boys and felt that this was a crucial time for an intervention that would help channel their thoughts and energies in constructive ways, and provide them tools to address the challenges they faced. To respond to this need, the team developed *Naanu Samartha* (I am capable), an intense eight week online program for adolescent boys (15-20 years) in the juvenile justice system, comprising 21 sessions on life skills themes such as self awareness, interpersonal relationships, understanding and managing emotions, decision-making, problem-solving, gender sensitivity, basic communication skills, financial literacy, substance abuse, digital safety, and government schemes and vocational trainings. The proposal for the pilot program was well received by the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka. It was presented to the Members of the High Court Committee on Juvenile Justice as well as the Principal Magistrates and Members of JJBs. With their approval and the support of UNICEF office for Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, and Members of JJBs of Bengaluru, Kalaburagi, and Mysuru, the fascinating journey of the *Naanu Samartha* Pilot Program began on 2 August 2020.

Of the 12 boys who participated in the online course, 10 boys completed it on 21 October 2020. They braved through technological challenges including power cuts, network issues, data problems, as well as domestic problems such as lack of privacy and gruelling work schedules. The incorporation of restorative elements, such as co-creation of values for the sessions, the use of a talking order, and using powerful reflective questions to guide the discussions, helped create a safe space for self-reflection, enabling the boys to express themselves comfortably. While COVID-19 has aggravated vulnerabilities, it created opportunities for us to reach adolescents in districts such as Mandya, Kalaburagi, Shivamogga, Sholapur, and Managaluru, and enable

71 RP Team Praxis Circle, facilitated on 25 September 2020.

72 RP Team Praxis Circle, facilitated on 1 December 2020.

73 Suo Motu Writ Petition (Civil) No.4 of 2020, order dated 03 April 2020.

their access to an online social-emotional learning program.

Following the success of the Pilot programme, the RP team decided to offer the *Naanu Samartha* program to girls in the juvenile justice system. The second batch began on 30 September 2020 for 22 children living in one CCI in Bengaluru, with additional support from Azim Premji Foundation and Catholic Club Orphans Trust, and the third batch began on 14 December 2020 for 11 children integrated back into the community.<sup>74</sup> A total of 39 girls from Bengaluru and one from Kalaburagi participated and 31 completed the course. Together with members of the Enfold team and external facilitators, the girls engaged in self-reflection on various life skills such as self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, gender, and managing emotions. They also received inputs on financial literacy and learned about various Central and State level schemes and vocational training opportunities that they could access. The use of Restorative Circle elements during the sessions enabled the co-creation of safe spaces in which the girls could comfortably share their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations.

### **3.4. Transformative potential of Restorative Processes for Children**

Facilitating Circles in a trauma aware, voluntary and safe space has enabled the Circle Keepers to observe several positive changes in the children. One of these is the acknowledgement of harm caused by children in conflict with law, and taking accountability for future actions. For instance, one boy continuously worried about the harm he caused. After a few Circles, he was able to listen to and learn from all the other participants who shared their own narratives. Following this, he was able to acknowledge that the harm caused was in the past, and focus on his future goals.

Circles have also helped to heal emotional wounds, and repair relationships to a certain extent. For instance, one boy was really angry with his family, as they had ignored him while they were in the police station, prior to being admitted into the OH. During the Circles, he was able to see their actions in a different light, after listening to the other boys describing the importance of familial relationships. It prompted him to start talking to his family again.

Circles aid children's social and emotional development, growth and interpersonal relationships. During feedback sessions, Circle Keepers reported that children felt a greater sense of empathy, better situational awareness, and were able to use social and emotional skills learnt during Circles to manage daily problematic situations.

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<sup>74</sup> This was supported by the Directorate of ICPS, Department of Women and Child Development and Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, Government of Karnataka; UNICEF Field Office for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka and Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI).

## Resolving Conflict

The team was conducting weekly Circles with 17-year-old Savita and 14-year-old Anandi on various life skills themes. The girls had come up with several values and had agreed that what was said in the Circle would remain in the Circle. One day, however, Savita informed the Circle Keeper that Anandi had shared about Savita's conduct in the Circle with her other friends and they all teased her about it. The Circle Keeper offered to facilitate a dialogue with Anandi, but Savita refused and said that she would not like to be in a Circle with Anandi. The following week, however, Savita insisted that a Circle be held because Anandi had tendered a heartfelt apology and the two girls had hugged and made up! Without any adult intervention, Anandi was able to see the impact of her actions on Savita and both girls had been able to resolve an interpersonal conflict in a good way!

Another important positive transformation observed was about the ability of children to understand their positionality and identities, and articulate these well, following Circles. In a Circle on gender stereotypes, what emerged was that irrespective of diversity in age, experience, education and socio-economic status, the sharing of the Keepers and the adolescent girls in the Children's Home resonated with each other. The girls identified gender-based stereotypes they had been subjected to, expressed what they felt about the shackles imposed on them, and articulated their firm desire for an independent life and their belief that they had the potential to take care of their own needs as well as that of their families.

## Children's Voices

Feedback from children who attended Circles was collected through focus group discussions and interviews. These were conducted by independent consultants to ensure unbiased sharing.

### Feedback from adolescent boys who participated in Naanu Samartha

“I was able to manage my anger after the session.” AJ, boy participant of Naanu Samartha.

“The course has given me a different perspective on life and I am able to understand myself and control my emotions. My family has commented on the positive change in my behaviour and they appreciated this change. I learned about how to make decisions properly, about how to communicate, and how to manage anger.” OS, boy participant of Naanu Samartha.

### Feedback from adolescent girls residing in a Children's Homes

“We learned co-operation, friendship and togetherness.”

“If we are not talking to each other also, in the Circle I know they will listen to me. If there is any problem, I know that I will get my solution.”

“I learnt how to keep myself calm and to think before I speak to anyone.”

“[The Circle] helps me to speak freely and I don't get scared. I shared one of my problems in the Circle and

everyone gave me suggestions. That day I felt so thankful to be part of this circle. They helped me solve my problem.”

### **Feedback from adolescent girls in the community who participated in Naanu Samartha**

“Earlier I was very shy, I did not communicate with others much. The course has made me bolder, has helped me to learn to talk and to express myself.”

“The best thing about Naanu Samartha was the part about us talking openly, listening to each other, hearing each others’ issues. The fact that though there was the pandemic and people could not meet each other, still Enfold took the initiative to conduct this program, reach out and spend time with us. The Circle format was good. It helped everyone to give their opinion. Everyone got a chance to talk. It was neat.”

“The best thing about Naanu Samartha was that I learnt how to think independently, I learnt how I can live, how I can face problems.”

### **Feedback from boys residing in Observation Homes**

“There is no judgement, one can speak from the heart.”

“Everyone’s opinions are valued and respected.”

“[The Circle] reduces pain, and mind gets diverted.”

“Talking about what makes one happy, and happy memories reminds me about my friends and family, and this makes me feel good; I feel less lonely.”

“The sharing during the Circle process has helped me develop positive thoughts and relationships with other boys which further helps me in controlling my anger.”

“I realized how it feels when one hurts others and that one should not hurt others.”

“I learnt that I had made mistakes in the past. I have decided that when I go out again, I will not make such mistakes. I have gained awareness now. I will keep away from friends who have a negative influence on me (*Ketta friends inda doora irutthene*). I will take up work, earn money, I will take up work in some hotel, shop. I want to look after my parents and support my younger sister who is in 6th std.”

### **यह अपना न्याय है**

न्याय क्या है भाई, न्याय कैसा है भाई  
जो करता है वो भुगता है,  
जो नहीं करता है वह भी भुगता है  
यह अपना न्याय है  
कानून की आँखों पर जो चादर काली  
हो गयी गरीब की जेब खाली  
जमादार, हवल -दार सब पैसा खाये  
पर गरीब न्याय के लिए बस ठोकर खाये  
यह अपना न्याय है भाई।

## This Is Our Justice!

What is justice brother? How is justice brother?  
One who does (the wrong), bears it.  
One who hasn't done, pays for it too.  
This is our justice!  
The law tied a black band on its eyes  
The poor are left penniless.  
The cleaner, the guard - all take bribes  
The poor are shoved/ kicked around, seeking justice.  
This is our justice brother!

- Poem by a child residing in an Observation Home for nearly three years.

### 3.5. Impact of Circles on Keepers

Restorative Circles allow for a space where inner motivation can grow. Circles invite inwardly both levels of change, and shift the focus from outer to inner experiences.<sup>75</sup> This dual change in a person's behaviour and attitudes is what allows for positive changes in Restorative Circles. Circle Keepers at Enfold India reported many changes that they observed, being a part of several Restorative Circles. Team members debriefed at the end of every Circle, giving feedback on "What went well" and "What could have been done differently." This practice helped build the muscles of Keepers and helped deepen reflection on 'self' as well as on the art of facilitating Circles.

At a personal level, Circle Keepers felt that they had several transformations, after being introduced to Restorative Circles and also while facilitating circles. One Circle Keeper felt that facilitating Circles, in a safe and vulnerable space allowed her to feel more comfortable with touch; and this was a result of the deep emotional connections established through Circles. Circle Keepers believe that every Circle they attend, allows them to learn, unlearn, and listen; and that everyone feels heard and valued during Circles. Being a part of Restorative Circles has enabled many Keepers to be more open and vulnerable about their thoughts and feelings. This isn't always as comfortable for people who identify as introverted persons. Restorative Circles have also enabled Circle Keepers to become more aware of their positionality. Awareness of personal privilege and power, the need to sensitively calibrate tone of voice, body language, and choose appropriate words so as to ensure that power is not being exerted while facilitating Circles has increased. Keepers who are teachers or trainers have become more conscious of the need for humility and to recognize the inherent wisdom in all human beings. Keepers encouraged each other to move away from mannerisms that project power and authority over others. At times, Keepers had to nudge each other gently requesting them to refrain from lecturing during the Circles, especially during the Closing, encouraging each other to step back and enabling all participants to draw from the wisdom generated by all participants in the Circle.

Circles have been especially beneficial to improve and build relationships. Carolyn Boyes-Watson writes, in the context of Circles, "Trust builds slowly as the relationship grows, and that relationship becomes the leverage for even greater personal change."<sup>76</sup> This has been observed by all Circle Keepers at Enfold as well. Restorative Circles have an equalizing tendency in terms of the balance of power. Circle Keepers are able to notice that children were able to express more freely due to the non-hierarchical setting and process of a Restorative Circle. Deep levels of connection are also possible during Circles. Several Circle Keepers noted that despite the relatively short duration of a Restorative Circle, meaningful conversations, and strong relationships developed amongst the children and between the children and the Keepers too. Circle Keepers also noted that Restorative

75 Pranis, Kay. Stuart, Barry. & Wedge, Mark. *Peacemaking circles: From crime to community*. Living Justice Press. (2003), p.27.

76 Boyes-Watson, C. (2013). *Peacemaking circles and urban youth*. Living Justice Press.

Circles with staff at CCIs aided the creation of a more helpful relationship with both Circle Keepers, as well as the children. Circles also enabled community building, and a relational way of being, which they felt may have an impact on the society in the future.

### **Circle Keeper's "Aha!" moment...**

One Circle Keeper initially believed that she needed to 'teach' in some ways, and children would learn. During one online Circle, a child said 'Ma'am, this is so boring, can we talk about something else?' and her entire perception changed. She understood that teaching was not the purpose of a Restorative Circle. She just needed to ask the right questions, and the children will have all the answers.

Several Circle Keepers observed that they had an attitude shift towards a more 'restorative mindset', where values such as empathy, love and care had greater emphasis. One Keeper has recognized that Restorative Practice fosters an integrated ecological perspective aimed at personal and social transformation. As a trained social worker she recognizes the deep resonance with her own professional training in many ways, including how Circles empower of human-beings to grow in respect and kindness toward one another, strengthens human bonds and enables people to work through conflict when it arises so that they can live more harmonious lives based on application of universal values. She asserts that engagement with Restorative Practices has catapulted her back into a more conscious engagement with herself as well as her profession. The paradigm shift that Restorative Circles espouse reflects the process of humanization/re-humanization, where all are able to see participants as they are, and not in light of the harms that they may have caused or experienced.

## **3.6. Circle-Keeping Challenges and Solutions**

Facilitating Restorative Circles has been very rewarding for all Circle Keepers at Enfold India. Circle Keeping, however, is not without its challenges. Facilitating in-person Circles, as well as online Circles have come with their own unique set of issues that had to be overcome.

**Rapport building and strengthening a sense of community for meaningful Circle experience:** Keepers are encouraged to make themselves available to children and to build rapport and trust so as to deepen the sense of safety experienced by the children, and therefore enhance the Circle experience. All children, including children with disabilities, may also need extra attention from the Keepers, and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions, related to the Circle topics or about their lives in general. Keepers are therefore encouraged to demonstrate reliability, respect, trust and empathy, so that the children know they have someone who will be available to listen to them even outside the Circle. Keepers therefore make an effort to go a little early for in-person Circles so as to deepen rapport, and look out for children who may show signs that they may need some additional support. They then reach out to these children and let them know that they have someone who is willing to listen and assist in any way that is appropriate, working in partnership with them. Keepers also stay on after the Circle and gently reach out to children who have shared deeply in the Circle.

When the team decided to initiate Restorative Circles in CCIs during the pandemic, one of the biggest challenges was how to develop a deeper connection with the children online, given the fatigue they were experiencing in online classes as part of their academic program. Keepers debated on the risks of transmitting the virus to the children by going in person. After a detailed discussion with the person in charge of the CCI, and the

development of an internal protocol related to COVID-19 appropriate behaviour, the team decided that one Keeper would go in person and facilitate the Circle from a distance - sitting six feet away from the children who sat in a Circle away from her, while the other Co-Keeper remained online on a laptop. This was a useful way to develop rapport with the children who got a sense of the Keepers, and were able to experience at least a first few Circles through in-person facilitation. Subsequently, when the team felt that the risks were higher, they decided to facilitate the Circles online.

**Language barrier:** Language barriers may be a common phenomena, while Circle keeping in a country as diverse as India. Language preferences need to be considered while organizing participants and matching Keepers with each Circle, as conversing in one's preferred language enables the sharing to be much deeper and more nuanced. Keepers therefore need to be identified based on their familiarity with the languages spoken by the children as well as the staff of CCIs.

**Age differences:** Prior assessment is important to ensure that the participants have at least certain commonalities, whether in age, sex, language, or context. For instance, a huge age difference among children creates a power imbalance, requiring Circle Keepers to be attentive to the younger children who may at times be teased by the older ones. When this happens, it serves as an opportunity for the Keepers to invite children to reflect on which values have been disrespected, and to ask them what they would like to do to rebuild the sense of safety within the Circle. During Circles, it is possible that certain terms may be mentioned, which younger children may not understand. For instance, in an online Circle on gender with children between 12-15 years, the youngest child did not understand the term "menstruation". The Keeper briefly explained the basics of the human body and immediately contacted the person in charge of the CCI to alert her about the need to spend some time with the younger children to talk about sex and sexuality, offering to conduct a session for them on this, given that Enfold conducts such sessions for children.

**Facilitating participation of children with disabilities:** While the Circles are predominantly based on oral sharing, it is recognised that there are different ways of communication, especially among children and persons with disability. For instance, many adolescent boys in CCIs found it easier to express their emotions through art. While facilitating a Circle in a Children's Home in Bangalore, a Keeper observed that a child was hearing impaired and could not communicate orally. The child was encouraged to express her feelings and thoughts through art work and this helped enable her participation in the Circle.

**Time management:** Time management is important, and Circle Keepers need to make every effort to begin and end on time. Delays may arise due to circumstances beyond their control, including technical challenges that may come up. Circle Keepers may need to make adjustments in the number of prompts, and need to continuously evaluate the needs of the participants. A Co-keeper may be able to keep time efficiently. Despite best efforts, sometimes the time available in the Circle may not be enough for all children to share from their heart. Efforts need to be made to acknowledge the constraints, while also ensuring that the Circle does not end abruptly. With permission from children and concerned functionaries, the time could be extended. Keepers may consider consulting with the children and inviting them to share in their smaller groups and requesting them to have at least one participant in the sub-group to offer a story in response to the prompt though others are welcome to share too. This enables deeper sharing by fewer participants within a shorter time span.

**Equalizing power:** A Restorative Circle is built upon the notion of equality. Co-equalizing power may sometimes be an issue for Circle Keepers and there are times when the 'social worker', 'lawyer', 'trainer' or 'teacher' hat surreptitiously creeps in. It requires the Keepers to be conscious of this while trying to ensure that they bring their authentic human self forward as an equal participant in the Circle. Training on implicit bias, praxis Circles with Circle Keepers and debriefs with the Co-Keeper after every Circle, help the Keepers be more mindful and committed to ongoing learning.

## Dancing Aunty

In the first Circle that was facilitated in one CCI, the Keeper facilitated a community singing session, using actions, and danced along. At the end of the Circle she thanked the children for participating in the Circle and for their sharing. One child came up to the Co-keeper and asked whether she could call her Aunty. She responded by saying that she didn't mind being called 'Aunty', but would also be happy if she was called by her name only. The child said she felt uncomfortable calling her by name, (indicating that this was not appropriate in Indian culture given the age difference.) The Keeper then responded by reiterating the value that all participants in Circles have equal power, and therefore just as she would call another child by name, she would be happy if she too was called by name only. The child expressed surprise wondering whether the Keeper was joking. The Keeper then went on to reassure the child that she would want the child to feel comfortable so wouldn't mind being called Aunty either! Another child then said that she would like to call her 'Dancing Aunty'! Keepers have made efforts like this to chip away at the notion of hierarchical relationships between children and adults. Other concrete measures that are taken are ensuring that all participants are seated at the same level, using a tone of voice and demeanour that reflects respect for the dignity of each participant as an equal, rather than as a 'student', affirming the wisdom shared by all participants, refraining from lecturing, etc.

With children, Keepers have had to plan in advance to divide the children into batches in a manner that the quieter or younger ones would feel more comfortable to share. Additionally, in groups consisting of children with a wider age range, Keepers need to be sensitive to the power play amongst the children. In one batch of children in a CCI, the younger group of girls within the batch sat around one laptop, and the older ones around another laptop in the same room, next to the Centre. However, the younger children had not gelled as a group amongst themselves - and so though the Talking Piece was passed around the children in both groups, when it came to this younger group, most of them would pass, and one or two of the older girls would tease the younger ones. Also in a Circle on teamwork, the younger ones were not able to work well together in a team. The Keepers realized that though the children themselves chose to sit in these two separate groups, the concern about the low level of participation by the younger children needed to be raised with all the children. After one of the younger ones was teased, the Keeper used the opportunity to pose a question in the Circle, about how one felt when one was teased, to enable reflection and generate empathy.

**Addressing difficult situations:** Keepers have had to step in and address bullying and even violence amongst the children - when one child slapped another one on her leg out of anger during an art activity, playing out a prior conflict that they were in. In this situation, the staff of the CCI who was also in the Circle was requested to step forward and join the mini sub-group that these children were in, and to talk with them quietly to try and resolve the situation between them. When the children came back to the larger group, the Keepers attempted to enable reflection on strategies that could be used to regulate anger and resolve conflict, even though that was not the original theme of the Circle.

Addressing non-cooperation restoratively during Circles may also sometimes prove to be a challenge. For example, at times, children and staff of CCIs find it hard to wait till the Talking Piece comes to them. Keepers would have to step in during these times and remind participants about the purpose of the Talking Piece and the value of listening from the heart. Responding restoratively to children when they taunt or tease other children during a Circle may also be an issue. In one Circle, a younger child was teased about her hairstyle through the use of a nickname. The Keeper used the opportunity to ask a question in the Circle about how

one felt when one was teased by a nickname. The child in question visibly perked up with the support that she experienced from this.

### **From reflection to action - moving from Restorative Circles to a Restorative Culture within the CCI:**

The team reflected on what are the key elements of a 'restorative culture', trying to create synergy with legal definitions of the term 'child friendly' as well as the principles enshrined in the JJ Act, 2015. They advocated with the management of the CCIs, requesting them to make time to sit in Circles, so that in due course, the staff would gradually be able to facilitate Restorative Circles with the children and each other on their own (with support from Enfold) in due course, hopefully resulting in Restorative Practices being institutionalized within the CCI. Another strategy was to include an action element, wherein participants were invited to think of one concrete way in which they could change their mindsets or behaviours while engaging with others in the CCI. For eg. in one Circle children on Emotions, the children were asked to think of any one child who was living in the CCI who they observed as feeling a little low or sad, and to identify one concrete step they would like to consider taking to enable that person to feel a little better, perhaps through meeting one unmet need. Another useful practice to help children to focus on certain aspects of restorativeness, was to invite them to identify any one particular value that could be practiced more consciously in the Circle.

Keepers sometimes feel frustrated because of the expectation that Circles with the caretakers in the CCIs would automatically result in some concrete visible changes in the way the adults responsible for the care of children interact with the children in the CCIs. Numerous discussions would take place on this topic during Praxis Circles and daily team meetings, particularly given that there were so many unmet needs of the staff themselves, leave alone those of the children in their care, given the high vacancies and poor functioning of the child protection system. Team members were urged to reflect on how inner transformation takes time, and that building a restorative culture in the CCI would require multi-pronged strategies and processes, facilitated over a long period of time. Though the management of the CCIs would in principle agree to the work with the team to achieve the objective of sensitizing the staff to the needs and feelings of the children and each other and actively strengthen these relationships to promote a Restorative culture in the CCI, the staff of some of the CCIs were always overworked and found it difficult to make time for Circles, particularly during COVID-19. Team members had to then stay with the feeling of frustration and continue to facilitate Circles with the children, knowing that the work of enabling positive change in terms of behaviours and attitudes of the adults in the CCI would have to be done in ways, other than through the powerful Circle experience.

**Customizing activities for online Circles:** Keepers had to spend extra time to design online Circles with children. This was because, in addition to the basic elements of the Circle, they had to find audio-visual resources that could be used to animate the participants, enrich the online sharing, and energize the children -particularly given the fatigue of online classes during the day. Finding Youtube videos that were age appropriate, culturally relatable, and relevant to the theme was indeed a challenge on the one hand, but enjoyable when a brilliant video resource was found. For eg. a wonderful video on [empathy](#) was found online, and one Keeper was requested to give a voice over in Tamil. This video then served as an excellent resource for a Circle on Empathy. Capturing takeaways at the time of check-out during online Circles helped consolidate the wisdom that emerged at the end of the Circle. The Keeper used the imagery of a community well and a bucket, explaining that rather than only drawing from the common community well, each participant could keep filling up the well, with the insights she had gained from the Circle - and this worked very well with the children.

**Technical challenges during online Circles:** Keepers faced several technical problems, including initial lack of familiarity with zoom, poor internet connectivity, electricity going off, etc., during online Circles. Having patience and being prepared for technical glitches can help Keepers facilitate Online Circles. Ensuring that every Circle is facilitated by a Keeper and a Co-Keeper, and to have empathetic tech-savvy team members available to provide technical support from a distance, helped navigate some of these challenges. Organizing children in front of the camera so that every participant is seen and heard (the essence of a Circle), through the use of additional speakers etc., takes time, and patience initially. A deep Check-in helps everyone understand each other's circumstances and makes it easier for participants to be patient with each other.

**Delays and Disturbances during Circles:** Minimizing delays in starting Circles facilitated for children in CCIs required Keepers to coordinate with the CCI staff much in advance and organize the children's routine so that it gives them enough time to come on time for the Circle. Dealing with disturbances during Circles has also been a challenge, particularly because these intrusions altered the mood and sometimes distracted participants away from the sharing that was taking place. In the Observation Home, Circles facilitated on days when the JJB proceedings were on, would sometimes be disrupted by calls for boys who were summoned. On other occasions, children would be called out from the Circle by staff who wanted children to assist in some task, such as cooking, etc. In Online Circles, on some occasions, children would send messages to the Keepers in the chat, or to each other, when there was more than one laptop in use within the same Circle. The Keepers had to gently remind the children to listen deeply from the heart instead of chatting, encouraging them to sit a short distance away from the device. Keepers became more aware of the need to intersperse the question rounds with a Popcorn round, or a brief activity that resonated with the theme. Appeals were made to the Staff of the CCI to respect the Circle process and refrain from pulling out children from the Circle, unless it was absolutely necessary.

**Being inclusive:** Ensuring that all children residing in a CCI have the opportunity to experience the Circle has been a challenge, particularly when it meant organizing the children into batches of not more than 15 children (for a meaningful Circle experience), and inducting new children who are admitted into the CCI mid-way. What worked in these situations is that the children who had sat in two or more Circles, explained the purpose, values and guidelines to the new children and helped them ease into the Circle.

### 3.7. Tips for Keeping Circles with Children

These tips can be adapted bearing in mind the context, the background and circumstances of the participants, including cultural appropriateness:

#### Circle logistics

- **Number of participants:** For deep and meaningful sharing to take place, it helps to ensure that the Circle does not have more than 15 participants. For Circles with younger children, a smaller number could also be considered.
- **Duration:** For children between 7-12 years, the ideal duration is between 20-40 minutes and for older children between 1- 1.5 hours.

#### Preparation

- Preparation in advance helps in identifying the theme and how it fits into the process and level of engagement with the children at the time, workshopping questions, identifying suitable activities, exploring the possibility of popcorn rounds to enable discussion, translating the plan into the preferred language of the participants, and enabling the Keepers to reflect on and identify their own stories and likely triggers in response to the questions. Keepers share their own stories in response to the questions with each other, and sometimes give each other feedback when some content may not be appropriate for the children. This prior reflection on the rounds, enables the Keepers to dig deep and share authentically, even offering snippets of one's life that may respond to what children may have shared in previous Circles. A decision is also made as to which Keeper would go first, and which order we would place ourselves in the Circle, so as to model deep sharing or perhaps even pick up the thread should the sharing veer too far outside the theme.
- Care needs to be taken to adapt activities and available tools so that they resonate with the children.
- Having a bank of questions and a basket of games and videos that could be used to add value to the

sharing or to lift or calm the mood or energy levels when required, is very useful.

- A flexible approach while facilitating a Circle helps Keepers to respond to the needs of the children as well as the energy and mood of the group. For example, Keepers have sometimes shown a video during online Circles instead of posing the question that had been planned for the Circle, and then opened it up for Popcorn. The shift in energy then enables children to feel comfortable to share their thoughts, without waiting for the Talking Piece to come for them, which, as we know well, can be an exercise in patience.

## Tools

- **Emotion Cards:** Children may often find it challenging to articulate their emotions, especially during the first couple of Circles. Use of audio-visual cues can help children develop a vocabulary. Emotion Cards can be made with images and words in local languages to indicate different types of emotions.
- **Activities:** Keepers used a range of activities to animate the Circle process. These include art based activities where they were invited to draw something and then share what the drawing represented, in response to a question. Origami is used to enable children to create something out of paper, which they could also display or keep with themselves. Lyrics to popular songs were changed in order to resonate with the Circle theme and taught to the children, to enable them not only remember the life-skills but to also experience some fun and joy. For example the popular song “When you are happy and you know it clap your hands” was adapted to include verses on other emotions such as ‘sadness’, ‘anger’, ‘tiredness’, etc., and sung along with facial and body movements too!
- **Role Play:** Two Keepers chose to use Role Play in a circle on conflict resolution, first enacting a scene between two close friends in a conflict situation wherein their behaviour towards each other was damaging to the relationship, and then re-enacted the same conflict situation, demonstrating a more constructive way of resolving the conflict. Though there was a little preparation, the Keepers spontaneously enacted behaviours that the children had themselves shared about in earlier Circles, while talking about conflicts they faced within the CCI. The Role Plays were a hit, and triggered deep conversations on the questions planned for the Circle.
- **Case Stories:** Developing case stories that children can relate to can help draw out responses, particularly on sensitive topics such as family dynamics, responding to conflict, making decisions, etc.
- **Share in-pairs:** Some children may feel more comfortable sharing in a smaller group than with the larger group. Children can be divided into small groups for some Circles to enable deeper sharing.

## Modalities in Online Circles

- For online Circles, asking the participants to number themselves helps establish the talking order and ensure that the passing is smooth. Sometimes, two groups comprising around 6 -7 children are invited to sit in a ‘V’ shape in front of two separate laptops, and sit in a manner that establishes the order in which they would like to share.
- Flipping the order of speaking in Online Circles helps to ensure those at the end don’t always have to wait for their turn in every round.
- Values such as confidentiality need to be gently reiterated during in-person and online Circles. Confidentiality and privacy is a concern during online Circles for children residing within their own homes, as children are often living in confined spaces with other family members or friends. Their life situations also need to be taken into account while framing questions, especially in these circumstances. With the video being turned off and the non-availability of ear-phones, it is possible for other people near the child to listen to what is being said by the other participants. Special care needs to be taken in order to avoid such a situation.
- When poems, videos or songs are used as tools to enhance the Circle experience, Keepers have realized

that extra effort needs to be taken to ensure that children understand the dialogue in the video or the lyrics of the song, as the case may be. In the case of videos, team members have prepared a voice-over in the vernacular, and in the case of the songs and poems, the lyrics or the text of the poem were either pasted on the chat, or shown to them on a slide alongside.

- It is helpful to ask the children in an online Circle what have been their key takeaways after every Circle, and capture these on a Whiteboard.

### **Being mindful of needs of children**

- Keepers need to be conscious of participants' needs and respond sensitively, even when they may be disruptive. An effort can be made to reach out to a child outside the Circle to understand their needs or perspective.
- Keepers may have to check in on some participants before and after the Circle, and consciously make time for this.
- Breaks may be given or activities conducted during the Circle, bearing in mind the mood and needs of the children.
- If children feel hesitant to share their stories with the larger group, they can be encouraged to share in pairs or smaller groups. Of course, they are always given the option to pass the Talking Piece.
- It helps to end Circles on an empowering note, especially in Circles that are intense or entail deep sharing. Keepers need to be vigilant to the likely impact of the sharing of participants on the others in the Circle, including on themselves, and conclude the Circle in a manner that leaves participants with a sense of hope and solidarity.
- Using a trauma-informed approach, Keepers need to ensure that children are reminded that they are free to reach out to the Keepers, or other trusted persons in the CCI, should they need to process something further.
- Circle-Keepers may need to physically comfort a child or adult participant who is experiencing strong emotions. This may include gently reassuring the participant saying that she could take the time she needs to express and regulate these emotions, asking a younger child if she would like to come and sit next to the Circle-Keeper, or if she needs some time out. The Co-Keeper then steps in to take the child aside and offers a listening ear or a comforting touch after taking the child's consent. A staff-member at the CCI may also be asked to assist if the child needs care.
- Care is taken to calibrate the depth of the sharing in Circles, recognizing that the Keepers may not have the training or resources to support children emotionally or in other ways, if exigencies arise during the Circle. When asking questions that are likely to elicit painful memories, instruct the participants to only share about experiences involving pain that has been healed for the most part, rather than memories that trigger intense emotions.
- Keepers are encouraged to always have a backup plan and use their 'bag of tricks'. These could include switching to community building fun activities, or using the opportunity to pass the Talking Piece around again, and rephrasing a question so as to solicit sharing stories related to resilience, hope and self-preservation.
- Keepers are encouraged to be mindful of children with disabilities by enabling their participation by inviting them to sit beside them, providing them with worksheets, colours to draw, even taking help/support from a staff to assist them, engage them and assist to share their stories too.

### **Enabling and enhancing participation**

- If a participant decides to pass the Talking Piece during a particular prompt, the Keeper can consider passing it around for one more round. The participant may feel more comfortable and empowered to share during the second round, after listening to the stories shared by others.
- If the group is small and there is adequate time, the Talking Piece may be passed more than once during the

round. This gives the Keepers and the children an opportunity to delve deeper or add more to their sharing.

- Keepers play an important role in deepening trust and connection amongst participants in the Circle. Sharing deep personal stories authentically, demonstrating vulnerability and humility, modelling answers to help children better understand the question all helps participants to feel more comfortable to share.
- Inviting participants to prepare the Centre, plan the openings and closings, and facilitate the rounds helps create a sense of co-ownership of the space.
- It helps to seek the views of the children about the themes for discussion in the Circle and frame Circle plans in response to the needs expressed by them.

### **Strengthening muscles in Keeping Circles**

- Praxis Circles for Circle Keepers helps create a space for reflections, and identification of needs and support, and recharge batteries
- It helps to debrief immediately after the Circle to check-in with each other and share what went well, and what could be done differently next time, and the support needed.
- **Planning the day and prioritizing Circles:** To the extent possible, difficult conversations or program meetings need to be avoided before getting into a Circle, as Keepers are likely to find themselves unable to ground and centre themselves in order to play this important role effectively.
- **Recognition of the difference between Circle Keeping and other roles:** Circle Keepers are reminded to be mindful of their role as a Keeper, and leave aside the other hats they may wear (lawyer, social worker, counsellor, teacher etc) and make efforts to create a space where everyone feels comfortable enough to share freely from the heart without fear of judgment.

## **Checklist for Circle Keepers**

### **Preparation of Self:**

- Have centred myself before the Circle begins, reminding myself that I am an equal participant, with respect for the wisdom that each participant brings, while performing the role of Keeper.
- Have reminded myself that I am stepping into the Circle as a human being and not as a professional, rights activist or functionary.
- Have reminded myself that I should not exercise power to do things 'to' or 'for' people, and am consciously aiming to create a space using 'power with' as a Circle keeper. This includes my words, body language, tone of voice, attitude and manner of facilitation.
- Have workshopped the Circle with my Co-Keeper, including our stories in response to the questions, and requested for assistance as per my need.

### **Preparation of the Centre:**

- Made sure the material for the Centre including the Values and core circle Guidelines (written out neatly and in a size easily read by everyone while seated around the Circle) are ready before the Circle.
- Involved the participants in setting up the Centre.
- Identified suitable activities that could be facilitated with the participants before or during the Circle.
- Have asked the participants to bring/draw an object that has a personal meaning to them for the Centre in the next Circle.

### **Talking Piece:**

- Have made sure there is a suitable Talking Piece for the Circle.

### **Opening and Closing:**

- Prepared a suitable Opening to set the tone for the Circle.
- Prepared a suitable Closing that is related to the Circle questions.

### **Check In and Check Out:**

- Have planned a suitable Check in to enable participants to share how they are feeling.
- Have planned a suitable Check Out which includes what they are taking away as insights gained.
- Have taken care to ensure that the Circle does not end abruptly and to the extent possible, ends on an empowering note.

### **Circle Questions:**

- Have prepared Circle questions and the process in a manner that helps to achieve the purpose.
- Have ensured that the questions in each Round are short, empowering, easy to understand, relevant to the theme, and that at least one question invites participants to share a story from their own lives.
- Have written them down.
- Have ensured that the questions are open-ended, not yes/no or leading questions.
- Have reminded myself to request participants to share transformative stories from their lived experience, when it is appropriate to do so in the Circle.
- Have extra Circle questions prepared, in case of need.

### **Feedback and Documentation after the Circle :**

- Have documented responses during the check-out.
- Have made a record of the Circle, including insights gained from the experience for ongoing learning as a Keeper.

Finally, there are plenty of resources available on Restorative Circles, which offer guidance on facilitation of Circles with children. A list of useful resources is as follows:

## **List of Resources**

- Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis | *Circle forward: building a restorative school community* (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press
- Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships*, Living Justice Press (2010) Yusern, D., Johnson, K., Curtis, D., & McClung, B. (2015). *A Circle a Day - 170 Scaffolded Questions*(Rep.). Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice.
- Oakland Unified School District, *Restorative Justice Implementation Guide: A Whole School Approach*, Available at: <https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/BTC-OUSD1-IG-08b-web.pdf>
- Amos Clifford, *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*, Available at: <https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/RP%20Curriculum%20and%20Scripts%20and%20PowerPoints/Classroom%20Curriculum/Teaching%20Restorative%20Practices%20in%20the%20Classroom%207%20Lesson%20Curriculum.pdf>
- McCarney, W. (n.d.). A Restorative Justice Approach to working with children in Residential Institutions . Available at <https://www.unicef.org/tdad/4williemccarney.pdf>
- Nancy Riestenberg, *Circle in the Square: Building Community and Repairing Harm in School* (1st edn, Living Justice Press 2013)
- Kay Pranis, *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking* (1st edn, Good Books 2015)
- Kay Pranis and others, *Peacemaking Circles: From Conflict to Community* (1st edn, Living Justice Press

2003)

- Kathy Evans and others, The Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education (1st edn, Good Books 2016)
- Martha Brown, Creating Restorative Schools: Setting Schools Up to Succeed (1st edn, Living Justice Press 2018)
- Borbála Fellegi and Dóra Szegő, Handbook for Facilitating Peacemaking Circles (Forsee Research Group; P-T Múhely 2013). Available at: [https://www.euforumrj.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/peacemaking\\_circle\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.euforumrj.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/peacemaking_circle_handbook.pdf)
- Bill Hansberry, A practical introduction to restorative practice in schools: Theory, skills and guidance (Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2016)
- Joe Brummer and Margaret Thorsborne, Building a Trauma-Informed Restorative School: Skills and Approaches for Improving Culture and Behaviour (1st edn, Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2021)
- Counsel to secure justice, Bonds of Hope: Connecting to Children in the Observation Homes of Rajasthan (2020). Available at: [https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020\\_Final-1.pdf](https://csjindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UNICEF-Study-April-2020_Final-1.pdf)

### Websites with suggestions for energisers/worksheets

- [Youth Group Games](#)
- [460 Social Emotional Learning ideas in 2021 | social emotional learning, social emotional, social skills](#)
- [Art of Social Work – Kristina Sargent](#)
- [Mylemarks | Therapy resources for kids and teens - HOME](#)
- [The Genderbread Person | A free online resource for understanding gender identity, gender expression, and anatomical sex.](#)
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0ERaebAxiN/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/ByGKi6XgJjQ/>
- [Grounding Techniques \(Article\)](#)
- [healingaccountability1-converted.pdf](#)
- [RADICAL ROADMAPS](#)
- [Guide and Toolkit](#)
- [How to Be Accountable: Take Responsibility to Change Your Behavior, Boundaries, and Relationships](#)
- [Conflict Workbook.pdf](#)
- [what is going on?](#)
  - <https://www.education.com/worksheets/social-emotional-learning/>

# CHAPTER 4

## Templates for Restorative Circles with Children

This Chapter contains templates of Restorative Circles that the Enfold team has facilitated with children in different CCIs, as well as online. Some of these have been inspired by and adapted from resources such as *Heart of Hope*<sup>77</sup> and *Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community*.<sup>78</sup>

### 1. Restorative Circle on Community Building

#### Opening

“Whether we come from the East, the West, the North or the South, all of us have something to share and contribute. We are different from each other, yet we are similar because each one of us is “a precious human being”. We may have different backgrounds, languages, colors, cultures, likes, dislikes, habits, and manners in various aspects of life. Each of our differences makes us unique as individuals. It is this difference, and this variety, like the seven different colours in the rainbow, that makes it so vibrant and beautiful.

- Unknown author

#### Talking Piece

We will use the Talking Piece (TP) during Restorative Circles to help us remember to listen and speak from the heart. Whoever is holding the TP has the opportunity to share, though they may also choose to be silent. Only the person holding the TP may speak, everyone else is invited to listen from the heart. Listening from the heart can help us to understand people better, and when we understand, then we are less likely to judge them. Such listening also helps us to gain from the wisdom shared by others and enhance our personal learning.

#### Check-in

How are you feeling today? Rate how you are feeling on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing ‘not feeling good at all’ and 10 representing ‘feeling great’.

#### Values

The Circle is a space where stories from our own lives are shared, enabling participants to feel more connected to each other, while also strengthening a shared sense of community. To ensure that all participants feel safe to share their stories, we need to take special steps to make it comfortable for everyone to share freely, without any fear. Please share what is important for you to feel safe and share freely from the heart? What value would you like to see practiced in this space, that will help create comfort and safety for you and everyone else in the Circle?

*The Keeper can give an example to help children understand what is being asked. Younger children could be asked to think about a friend or person they feel comfortable sharing about their life and to list what about this person makes you feel comfortable to do so. Pass the TP and invite children to share what they have listed. Send the TP a second time around for children to add. Read out the values that have emerged and invite the children to ask questions or clarifications (if any). The TP may be suspended while the discussion is facilitated. The Keeper can guide the discussion to help the group arrive at a shared understanding on each value. The Keeper then initiates a process of ensuring consensus on the values for the Circle. This could be by asking the participants to give a visual sign indicating willingness to adhere to the value, such as a thumbs up sign. Initially it is preferable to pick up each value card and ask for consensus from all the children. Inform the children that in the subsequent Circles they could add to this list of values too! See the Circle on Values for the step-by-step process. In online Circles, the Keeper could create a colourful slide,*

<sup>77</sup> Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships*, (2010) Living Justice Press .

<sup>78</sup> Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, *Circle forward: building a restorative school community* (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press.

on which the values are listed, and this is projected at the beginning of the Circle when the values are being affirmed, and again when there is need to recommit to them.

Refer to the instructions in the Circle to Generate Values for the process to be followed to build consensus about the values.

Co-Created Values / ಸಹ-ರಚಿತ ಸಲಾದ ಮೌಲ್ಯಗಳು <sup>79</sup>		
<b>Safety</b> <b>Understanding</b> <b>Sharing</b> <b>Love</b> <b>Trust</b> <b>Confidential</b> <b>Mentoring</b> <b>Empathy</b> <b>Comfortable</b> <b>Acceptance</b> <b>Respect</b> <b>No Disturbance while sharing</b>	ನುರಕ್ಕಷತ್ತು ಅರ್ಥಾತ್ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಕೊಳ್ಳಬುದ್ದು ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಪೋರ್ತೆ ನಂಬಿ ಕೆ ಗೌಪ್ಯಮತ್ತು ಮಾರ್ಗದರ್ಶನ ಅನುಭೂತಿ ಆರಾಮದಾಯಕ ಸೋವ್ಯಾಕ್ಷಾರ ಗೌರವ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ ಕೊಳ್ಳಬುದ್ದಿಗಳ ಯಾಮದೇ ಕೊಂಡರೆ ಇಲ್ಲಾಲ	

### Circle Guidelines<sup>80</sup>

Now that we have all shared values that we need to feel safe to share in the Circle, and have expressed our commitment to abide by them, we would now like to explain a few important Guidelines that we would like everyone to keep in mind. They are as follows:

- 1. Speak from the heart:** This means speaking for yourself, talking about what is true for you, based on your own life experiences. When we speak from the heart we are not aiming to impress others with our knowledge but choosing words that authentically express views and feelings that we consider important to us, expressing them by using non-verbal cues that help to build connection with others.
- 2. Listen from the heart:** We are used to judging other people. Sometimes without even knowing anything about another person we make assumptions about them, based on our past experience. These assumptions can prevent us from really understanding what they have to say, and what they have to say may be something important and helpful. Therefore, when we listen from the heart we are trying to set aside any assumptions and judgments we may hold about the person and make a serious attempt to demonstrate empathy - to try and walk in their shoes. This opens up the possibility of making wonderful discoveries about each other and ourselves too.
- 3. [Trust that you will know what to say - there is] no need to rehearse:** In Restorative Circles, we discover that we can trust that we will know what to say when it is our turn to speak. We don't have to mentally rehearse while we are waiting for the Talking Piece to come our way. When we find we are rehearsing (everyone does) we remind ourselves "no need to rehearse" and gently bring our attention back to the person who is speaking so as to listen deeply. This guideline is sometimes referred to as

79 Slide containing values identified by children in a series of Circles based on Life-Skills for children residing in a Children's Home for Girls.

80 Amos Clifford, *Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles*, pp 16-17, available at <https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/RP%20Curriculum%20and%20Scripts%20and%20PowerPoints/Classroom%20Curriculum/Teaching%20Restorative%20Practices%20in%20the%20Classroom%207%20lesson%20Curriculum.pdf>

“be spontaneous.”

**4. Without feeling rushed, say just enough:** Keeping in mind the limits of time and making room for everyone to speak, say just enough. This intention is also called “lean expression.” It is related to “speak from the heart” because we often find that when we speak carefully, we can express ourselves with fewer words than we would normally use, and that when we do so, our words often have more impact. One way to think about this is, when you are considering what to say, is to ask yourself, “Does it serve the Circle?” “

#### **Rounds:**

1. Who is your favourite movie actor and why? Or, who is your favourite sportsperson and why?
2. What is one thing you are good at that other people in the Circle don’t know about?
3. If you could have one superpower, what would it be? What would you do with that superpower?

#### **Check out**

How did you feel after today’s Circle?

**Closing:** *Play a piece of calm instrumental music for two minutes and invite children to close their eyes and hold hands if they feel comfortable.*

#### **Activity: Finding the common thread**

*Divide children into groups of five. If the group has 15 children, ask the first child to say the number ‘1’, the next child to say ‘2’, and the next child next to say ‘3’ and so on. Now tell all the children that those who are ‘1’s would be in Group 1, those who are ‘2’s would be Group 2, and so on. Now ask them to sit in their groups, and then identify five things they have in common with each other, excluding physical features like hair, body parts, etc. Give them five minutes and ask them to regroup and share with everyone what they found in common.*

## **2. Restorative Circle to Generate Values**

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships, (2010) Living Justice Press.*

#### **Opening**

*Invite children to sit in a relaxed, meditative position, straighten their back, place their hands on their knees, and close their eyes closed gently. Play meditative music softly in the background.*

We request you to try and calm yourself by breathing in and out a little deeply a few times slowly. Observe your breathing. *Continue saying ‘Breathe in, breathe out’, slowly for about 4- 5 times guiding the group to do this at their own pace.* Hear the soothing music, try and relax your entire body. As you breathe in, try to imagine you are breathing in positive energy and this energy is passing through your entire body - feel it going through your legs, your hands, your shoulders, ... every part of your body. And when you are breathing out, imagine that all the tension or worries you may have, are being released from your body. As you are doing this, feel the lightness in your body, and imaging you are a feather floating in a gentle breeze. Continue to breathe in and breathe out slowly and deeply. You can feel safe in this Circle. When you are ready, gently open your eyes, bring your hands together, rub your hands and pass on the warm energy to your face, your shoulders and legs.

**Talking Piece:** Refer to instructions on this, in Circle 1.

#### **Check-in**

Share how you are feeling, using facial gestures or body movements, without using any words.

## Values and Circle Guidelines

We need to remind ourselves of the commitment we had made in the previous Circle to adhere to values that will help everyone to feel safe to share in the Circle. I request you to give a thumbs up sign to indicate that you will make your best effort to respect the values. Now, please spend a moment to consider whether you would like to add any new value for the Circle today. *If new values are offered, follow the process of enabling shared understanding and seeking consensus.*

We would now like to remind you about the Circle Guidelines:

1. Speak from the heart;
2. Listen from the heart;
3. [Trust that you will know what to say - there is] no need to rehearse; and
4. Without feeling rushed, say just enough.

## Rounds

1. Share with us your favourite food or festival.

2. *Ask children to turn to the person on your right and discuss the following with that person.*

“Think about a friend or person you feel comfortable sharing happy as well as sad things about your life. What about this person makes you feel comfortable to do so?”

*Popcorn Share: After the children have shared the response to this question with their partners, ask them to now share with everyone in the Circle. Tell them that the TP has been kept aside for the moment, and that anyone is free to pop their hand up and ask a question, much like how popcorn pops while it is being made! Acknowledge and write what each child is saying on the black board/flipchart/whiteboard (for online Circles) or make note of it on a piece of paper.*

3. *Build consensus and commitment from each and every participant in the Circle, by facilitating the following process:*

- We have all come together in this Circle so that we can listen to each other's stories, and also tell stories from our own lives. For this to happen meaningfully, we all need to feel safe and comfortable to be ourselves, so as to share about what we really feel and think without fear, - expressing ourselves freely. Raise your hand if you agree?
- So, in order to enable this, let us all try and practice these values in the Circle. To help each person in the Circle feel safe and to also keep the Circle safe, I now invite you to raise your hands when I read out each value, if you agree to follow it while in the Circle.

1. Ask the children to raise their hands if they feel comfortable to accept each of the values in the Circle.
2. Tell them they are free to ask for clarifications on what each value means.
3. Facilitate discussion and provide clarifications when required.
4. It is alright to suspend the TP during this time for this purpose, as these are younger children who may not be able to wait for clarification till the TP comes to the Keeper/Co-keeper.
5. Write the values/value statements on the paper/paper plate that the group has agreed upon and keep it around the Circle.
6. Each group needs to have its own customized set of values, decorated in a manner that they can recognize it as theirs, and own it.
7. Tell the children that these values are like individual bricks that each one has placed as part of a common foundation that the group is working on together, in order to construct a nice strong imaginary building that will not crack or break and hurt anyone -a space where everyone feels safe to express themselves freely.
8. Tell the children that these are the initial set of bricks, and they are free to add new ones to help make the foundation even stronger over the course of subsequent Circles in the same group.
9. Tell the children that each one in the Circle has not only helped to build the foundation, but can also help to ensure the building is safe, by co-owning responsibility for adhering to the values

in the Circles. Explain by giving an example such as -“Since we have all agreed to follow the value of “Respect”, and in one of the Circles, someone says something disrespectful towards another participant, then when the TP comes to you, you can share how you felt when that value of “Respect” was not followed, explaining how you think that value ‘brick’ was broken, and how you are now feeling a little unsafe too. Gently request all participants to remember the importance of that value ‘brick’. Please remember to speak from the heart during this time, and not blame or judge the person who was disrespectful.”

### **Checkout**

Share how you are feeling in one word or through a song.

### **Closing**

*Rainstorm: The Keeper starts by doing some body movement, such as rubbing hands together; inviting the next person to the left to copy that movement and join in the motion, and the one sitting next to this person to do the same, and so on, all around the Circle like a wave, with the Keeper continuing the motion till the person on the left of the Keeper starts and completes that motion. The Keeper then stops this movement and begins another one, such as alternately slapping hands on the thighs. The next person follows this new movement and passes it to the person seated on the left, (while continuing the motion), who then passes it on, till the movement is passed around the Circle, and comes back to the Keeper, who then initiates yet another movement. Finally, in the last round, the Keeper once again starts the hand rubbing motion. When that motion comes back to the Keeper, the Keeper stops the movement. One by one, each person in the Circle follows the person before them in stopping the movement, until all are quiet.*

### **Values as building blocks**

In the next Circle after the values have been discussed and agreed upon, Keepers could prepare building blocks in advance (which could be books, or made through origami with paper), and either write/paste a label with values written on each of them. Use these blocks to demonstrate how values are like the foundation and bricks for a strong building, and only if the foundation is strong and the bricks are of good quality, will the building be safe. Keepers could stack up the values (building blocks) and remove one value ‘brick’ from the bottom and show them how the building would collapse if the values were not in the Circle. Explain that such a collapse in values would then make participants feel unsafe. So it is not only important that everyone agree to the values, but that each person also respects all the values, and shares the responsibility to keep the space safe.

## **3. Recognising Strengths (Online Circle)**

*For online Circles, number the participants as they enter the meeting room online or ask them to choose a number and indicate the number before their name. This helps establish the order of speaking and ensure that passing is smooth. Keepers can welcome participants by saying - “We are virtually connected on zoom, let’s visualize that we are all seated in a circle.”*

### **Opening**

Before we start, leave the device leaning on any surface. Then sit in a relaxed position, take deep breaths, keep your hands relaxed on your lap or on your knees. Now observe the room/space that you are in. Look on your left, on your right, top, bottom, in front of you, behind you, below you, right above you. Just observe. If your mind is wandering, become aware of this space and try to focus your attention to this space, and calmly observe your breathing.

*Welcome all the participants and tell them that they will be speaking in the order of the numbers against their names. State the theme of the Circle and explain the Circle again process briefly.*

**Center:** Show the participants a Centre created on your desk or a picture or image of the Centre by sharing your screen. You can ask children to create their own Center for the next Circle or send you images of their special items so that a collage containing them can be prepared and shared at the start of the next Circle.

**Talking Piece:** If we were to meet in person, we would use a Talking Piece (TP) to help us remember to listen and speak from the heart. Whoever is holding the TP has the opportunity to share, though they may also choose to be silent. Only the person holding the TP may speak, everyone else is invited to listen from the heart. Listening from the heart can help us to understand people better, and when we understand, then we are less likely to judge them. After our turn is over, we pass the Talking Piece to the person after us. For our next Circle, please bring a small object which holds some meaning to you, - it could be a gift or something you made or something from nature.

**Check-in:** On a piece of paper or book, draw how you are feeling today. You can draw something that represents how you are feeling in the form of a smiley face - in which you could draw different expressions.

**Guidelines and Values:** Refer to the instructions in the *Community Building Circle*.

### **Activity:**

I invite you to notice the first thing that comes to your mind from the following questions. You may choose to keep your eyes closed if you wish.

1. What was the first thing that you did when you woke up this morning?
2. How were you feeling?
3. What was that something that made you smile or laugh this week?
4. An important person in your life.
5. What relaxes you?
6. What things do you value in your life?

*Give enough pauses as you ask the questions for observation. The Keeper should also participate and give the participants a few minutes to make these observations.*

Each one of us will have different/unique answers to these questions, because every human being thinks and feels differently. This shows that we as individuals are very unique. There are no right or wrong answers, what is important is to try and know ourselves better and share some part of ourselves with others in the Circle, so as to build a sense of community.

### **Rounds**

1. If you could live anywhere in the world where would you live and why?
2. What are you good at? OR What are your strengths? It could be something you can do or something in your nature.
3. Talk about a time when you used one of your strengths to help yourself or someone else?
4. What is one strength or quality you have seen in someone and would like to learn from them?

**Check-out:** How are you feeling now? What are you taking away from this session? *Keeper can note the responses on a white board online.*

**Closing :** Regulate your breathing using the closing and opening of hands. *Adapted from Hoberman's sphere*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX1LgYMdHn0>

## **4. Building a Vocabulary for Emotions**

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships, (2010) Living Justice Press.*

**Material Required:** Chart paper and markers/crayons

**Opening:** Take a deep breath count from 1- 3 and exhale from your mouth. Sit comfortably, look around and listen intently to the sounds around you. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable. *The Keeper can play calming music for two minutes after which the children may be invited to open their eyes.*

**Check-in:** How are you feeling today? Please share with us what you have been sitting with since we last met.

**Guidelines and Values:** Refer to the instructions in the *Community Building Circle*.

*Explain to the children that in this Circle, they will hear and observe different types of emotions.*

**Activity 1:** If the Circle is being done online, a slide can be created capturing images of different types of emotions and labelling the emotions in the languages known to the children. Give children two minutes to view the slide. For an in-person activity, the images can be printed or drawn on chart paper and displayed on the floor or the wall or displayed on a computer screen. Alternatively, play [“Runaway” by Susan Yung, Esther Parobek and Emily Buchanan | Disney Favorite](#), and ask children to list or describe the emotions they could identify.

 हैरान अमृजित Amazed अमृजित	 गुस्सा अंद्रेत Angry अंद्रेत	 गर्व अंद्रेत Proud अंद्रेत	 निराश द्वेष्ट Disappointed द्वेष्ट	 समावित महसूस करना Respected रहितकरना
 शांत कालूद Calm कालूद	 आशावान धृतिकरन्तम Hopeful धृतिकरन्तम	 मानमारी धृतिकरन्तम Grateful धृतिकरन्तम	 ? ? उत्तम मे रुद्दिन Confused रुद्दिन	 निरियंत रहितकरना Relieved रुद्दिन
 असान्त रुद्दिन Disturbed रुद्दिन	 खुश त्वंकरन्तम Happy त्वंकरन्तम	 तेंग उत्तम Fed up उत्तम	 आशकर्त्ता चमिज द्वेष्ट Surprised द्वेष्ट	 उत्साहित उत्साहित Excited उत्साहित
 दहन रुद्दिन Tired रुद्दिन	 भावना को हेत Hurt हेत	 उद्धस द्वेष्ट / उत्तम Sad द्वेष्ट / उत्तम	 हृ/ भयमात्र रुद्दिन Scared रुद्दिन	
 उपेक्षित रुद्दिन Ignored रुद्दिन	 रोमांचित द्वेष्ट Thrilled द्वेष्ट	 समझा गया उत्तम Understood उत्तम	 चिंतित रुद्दिन Worried रुद्दिन	

Tell children that they will have to guess the emotion based on the situation explained and the accompanying image. Please feel free to create images and situations based on what you think the children will relate to.



Sp Adobe Spark

**Source:** "Printable Feelings & Emotions Cards with 8 Matching Card Games Ideas" <https://childhood101.com/helping-children-manage-big-emotions-printable-emotions-cards/>

## Rounds

1. Pick one emotion that you saw or heard about today and share a time when you felt that way in the recent past. Share a story about some incident that may have healed and left a scar, but not something that is still a fresh wound and may hurt you to share.
2. Where did or do you feel that emotion in your body?
3. Imagine you can design a room or space that makes you feel comfortable and relaxed. Draw this space and describe it, OR share a song that makes you feel happy and to sing it if you feel comfortable?

**Check-out:** How are you feeling now and what do you wish to take away from the Circle today?

## Closing

*The Guest House* by Rumi translated by Coleman Barks  
This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.  
A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
As an unexpected visitor.  
Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.  
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.  
Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

**Activity:** *An energizer can be facilitated if the Keeper senses that the children are feeling heavy after the Circle. [The Hand Game](#) could be played in-person. The group should sit in a Circle and place both their hands on the floor. One tap would mean that the flow continues. While a double tap would mean that the flow gets reversed.*

## 5. Exploring Empathy through Happiness

**Materials required:** Crayons and chart paper cut into similar shapes.

### Opening:

“When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”

- John Lennon

**Check-in:** Use a facial expression to tell us what you are feeling today.

**Values:** *Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre (for an in-person Circle, or add it to the slide containing the values in an Online Circle).*

*Place emotion cards related to happiness at the Center of the Circle. A sample list of such cards is given below. Include images as well as some children may not be able to read the text.*

Inspired प्रेरिति	Creative रचनात्मक	Loving प्रेम भाव रखना
Content संतुष्ट	Sensitive संवेदनशील	Affectionate सनेही
Fulfilled परपूरण	Hopeful आशावान	Courageous साहसी
Important महत्वपूरण महसूस करना	Confident आश्रवस्त	Respected सम्मानित महसूस करना
Ecstatic अतिआनंदित महसूस करना	Amused मनोरजीत होना	Inquisitive जजिजासापूरण
Trusting भरोसा रखना	Optimistic आशावादी	Liberated मुक्त महसूस करना
Accepted स्वीकृत महसूस करना	Powerful शक्तिशाली	Peaceful शांतपूरण
Joyful आनंदिति, हरषति	Interested रुचति, दलिचस्पी महसूस करना	Proud ग्रव महसूस करना
Happy खुश	Excited उत्साहिति	Cheerful प्रसन्न /हंसमुख

We invite you to walk around the Centre and read the cards placed around the Centre. Each one has one emotion written on it. Pick up any one of these emotion cards that you relate to at this time. You are going to be invited to share a story of a time in your life when you felt that particular emotion, in the Circle.

### Rounds

1. Share an incident/ story from your life when you felt this emotion.
2. Share a time when something made you happy, but it also caused harm or difficulty to another person.
3. What is one thing that makes you instantly happy?

**Check out:** What are you taking away from this Circle? Which emotion do you want to talk about in the next Circle?

**Closing:** Distribute the pieces of paper to the children and instruct them to colour on a piece of paper what happiness looks like for them and to arrange it in any design they like once they are all done. This can later be strung together and placed in the Centre in subsequent Circles.



The colour of happiness - made by participants in a Circle facilitated in the Observation Home, Bengaluru

## 6. Building Trust

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Circle forward: building a restorative school community (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, p.111-112.*

**Materials required:** Eight copies of two different images, pencils, crayons, A4 sheets for every child, and colourful ribbons for every participant in the Circle.

**Opening:** Invite the children to breathe in and out deeply, and to focus on their breathing. Play soothing instrumental music for at least two minutes.

**Check-in:** How are you feeling now? Is there anything particular on your mind that you wish to share with us in this Circle today?

**Values and Guidelines:** Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre or add it to the slide containing the list of values agreed to.

**Activity:** Divide the participants into pairs. Give participant 1 an A4 sheet and a pencil and participant 2 will be [given a picture to describe](#) to participant 1. Instruct participant 2 to describe the picture without telling participant 1 the 'name' of the object, emotion, or person. Participant 1 will have to draw based on the instructions of participant 2. After it is ready, participant 1 can share the picture with participant 2 and they can compare it with the original picture. Participant 1 and participant 2 can then switch roles and repeat the activity with a different image.

### Rounds

1. What was your experience of this activity and what did you feel?
2. What does the word 'trust' mean to you? Write down or draw what you think it means.

3. Think of people around you or in your life that you can trust. What about them makes you trust them? If you find it difficult to think of the people, it is all right. Name some people around you or in your life right now and see if they have the points you made in Round two about what the word 'trust' means to you?
4. What is it about you that other people can trust you?

**Check-Out:** What is it that you are taking away for yourself from this Circle?

### Closing

*Distribute one piece of ribbon to each person and give the following instructions.*

Turn to the person to your left. While tying your ribbon to that person's ribbon, say some words of encouragement to each other and mention something specific that you appreciate about the person. When you finish, turn to the person to your right and tie the other end of your ribbon with the ribbon of the participant and exchange words of encouragement and appreciation. Each person should have both given and received encouragement. Once the ribbons are tied, place this big circle made out of coloured ribbon pieces gently around the Centre.

## 7. Self Love

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Heart of Hope: A Guide for Using Peacemaking Circles to Develop Emotional Literacy, Promote Healing & Build Healthy Relationships, (2010) Living Justice Press.*

**Materials:** A4 sheet for every participant, crayons, and pencils

### Opening

*"You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."*

- *Attributed to Gautama/ Siddhartha Buddha, sage of India, C. 563-493 BCE*

**Check-in:** Please draw an outline of a heart. Now, fill it with drawings and colours of what is in your heart today.

**Values and Guidelines:** Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre or the slide containing the list of values in an online Circle.

**Main Activity:** Creation of a self-love poster.

*Invite children to sit comfortably such that they can see each other and also have space to do drawing/ writing activity. Ask participants to use a marker to draw a circle and to divide the circle into two halves. Explain that each half represents one of two aspects of self: the physical self and the emotional self. Ask participants to close their eyes for a minute and take deep and peaceful breaths and think about their physical and emotional selves. They can write or draw to express who they are physically and emotionally.*

### **Rounds:**

1. Please share the poster and tell us what you have made.
2. Sometimes we may find it difficult to love and care for ourselves. Let us discuss this a little bit and those who are comfortable, please do feel free to share what is difficult about loving or being kind to ourselves? *The Keeper may consider suspending the TP and asking the participants to discuss this through a Popcorn round, to enable them to understand the nuances of this question. This could include discussing aspects related to guilt about spending time in self-care due to religious or cultural reasons, feelings arising out of a low self-esteem, etc.*
3. Share a story from your life that helps us understand what showing love and kindness to ourselves would look like?

**Activity** How would you like to show love and be kind to yourself? You can write a love letter to yourself or draw a picture which represents your love for yourself.

**Check out:** Share your thoughts and feelings about today's Circle

**Closing:** Show this short video to the children - [Henry & Leslie \(A Children's Story About Confidence and Self-Love\) kids #bullying podcast](#)

## **8. Friendship**

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Circle forward: building a restorative school community (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, p.97.*

**Opening :** Remember a time when you were happy or calm. Notice where you were, with whom and the different sensations in your body and how you felt at that time. Keeper can play soothing meditation music for at least two minutes.

**Check-in:** What is the weather like inside of you today?

**Talking Piece:** Children and Keepers can share about their Talking Pieces

**Values and Guidelines:** *Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment.*

### **Rounds**

1. Please draw an image that tells us what “friendship” means to you. Share with us what you have drawn.
2. What are some of the things you like about friends?
3. What are some of the things that are difficult for you in a friendship?
4. Fill in the blanks “I know someone is a friend when they \_\_\_\_\_”
5. Fill in the blanks “I can be a good friend by \_\_\_\_\_”

**Check-out:** What are you taking away from the Circle today?

**Closing:** [KK - Yaaron](#) or an appropriate vernacular song on friendship

**Activity:** Rajni, Darshan, Vijay - an adapted version of Zip Zap Zop. **Refer to page**

## 9. Love

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Circle forward: building a restorative school community (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, p.97.*

**Opening:** Play some soft instrumental music in the background, and slowly read out the following quotation:

“Piglet: How do you spell love?  
Pooh: You don’t spell it, you feel it.”  
*Winnie the Pooh*

**Check in:** What is the weather like inside you today?

**Values and Guidelines:** Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment.

**Activity:** Give the children a piece of plain white paper and ask them to draw on the paper depicting what they think is the colour of love, and the expression of love and what it means to them.

### Rounds

1. Share with the Circle what you have drawn and why ?
2. What does love mean to you?
3. What is difficult about love?
4. What do you think are the ingredients of a healthy loving relationship?

**Check-out:** What are you taking away from the Circle ?

**Closing:** “Love is not only something you feel, it is something you do.” – David Wilkerson

**Activity:** Invite children to make an Origami Heart and either give it to the person they would like to demonstrate the love they feel for that person, or spend a moment in silence and send positive energy to that person.

## 10. Vision for a good life

*Adapted from Carolyn Boyes-Watson and Kay Pranis, Circle forward: building a restorative school community (2015) St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, p.p. 140-141., 259*

**Materials:** Old news papers for each child, colours, pencils, sketch pens, plain papers, colourful sheets for an origami activity.

**Opening:** Put your hands together in a way that the fingertips of both the hands are touching each other. Expand the fingers in the form of a ball till it stretches still touching each other while breathing in and compress when breathing out.

**Check-in :** How are you feeling today? Draw a picture to describe your feelings.

**Guidelines and Values:** Remind the children about the guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre.

**Main Activity:** Ask children to think about how they see themselves in a few years. Now ask children to take one newspaper each, take 5 minutes and look at the similar or closest images in the newspaper and mark them as to where they would aspire to be a few years from now. If the children are unable to understand, the Keeper can use an example. Newspapers are used to help them visualize, especially children who cannot draw or write. If newspapers are not available or if the Circle is being facilitated online, participants can be asked to imagine where they would like to see themselves in the future and express through writing, art or craft. Prompts for them to think about their future when going through the newspaper or expressing themselves through art or writing, can be:

- Where would you want to be in a few years?
- What would you want to be doing in a few years?
- Who would you want to be surrounded by?

### **Rounds**

1. Share where you would like to/ aspire to see yourself in a few years from now ? What were the images/advertisements/pictures or text in the newspaper that helped you imagine this future.
2. What do you see as challenges or hurdles that may come in the way from reaching your envisioned future ?
3. What would you like to change in your life that would help you move towards this vision for yourself?
4. What support would you need to achieve your goals and from whom?

**Check-out:** Share the feelings and thoughts you are having after doing this activity ?

**Closing:** Instruct children to make an [Origami GIFT BOX with Cover](#). Ask children to make a list of strengths they can identify in themselves and write it in a piece of paper. Share the list with the group and fold it and put it in the gift box and give them back to themselves as a reminder that they are an amazing person and have lots of strengths and to keep filling the gift box with everything they identify as their personal strengths.

## **10. Conflict resolution -I**

**Materials required:** Colour pencils, crayons and paper to draw.

**Opening:** “Conflict is not a problem that needs solving but a phenomenon that needs understanding.”  
~Dominic Barter

**Talking Piece:** Ask the children who have brought a talking piece to share a story about it. Circle Keepers to do the same.

**Check-in:** How are you feeling today?

Given that now you have heard the feelings of the participants please spend a moment in silence and think about one or two participants whose needs you may want to respond to during the Circle process.

**Guidelines and Values:** Remind the children about the guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre.

Explain to the children that the Keepers will be role playing a conflict that has taken place between two close friends. Invite the children to keenly observe the verbal and non-verbal behaviour and to try and understand the feelings that are being expressed.

**Brief story line for the Role Plays:** Saritha and Archana have been very good, thick friends for over five years now. They supported and cared for each other during difficult times. They helped each other, cried on each other's shoulders, went to school in the same bus, ate lunch together, exchanged favourite clothes and headbands, wrote little letters to each other and shared many fun-filled times. In the academic year that had just begun, a new girl Suman was admitted into their class. Saritha's birthday was the following week and both she and Archana had planned to meet at Saritha's house and then go to the aquarium in the city's central park and after that to the mall nearby to eat ice cream. Saritha invited Suman to join them for this program, without consulting with Archana. Archana is very upset about this.

*The first Role play is enacted based on this story, in a manner that depicts an unhealthy way of dealing with conflict. The second time, the same story is enacted depicting a constructive way of dealing with the conflict, resulting in the two friends becoming much closer to each other.*

**Popcorn round:** “Is conflict always bad?”

### **Rounds**

1. Share about a time when you had a conflict/fight/quarrel with someone? What are some feelings you might have had when you were in conflict with another person? Choose a conflict which is not very severe. You don't need to name the person in your story, you can just share about your feelings at the time.
2. When you are in conflict with someone, generally speaking how do you behave? What kind of words did you use?
3. Share about a conflict you may have been in, which you resolved peacefully. What did you do? How did you do it?

**Role Play version 2:** Keepers then enact a Role Play on the same story line, but this time, demonstrating how conflict can be resolved constructively.

**Additional Round** (if there is time):

4. What changes in a conflict when you place yourself in the shoes of the person you are having conflict with?

**Check-out :** How are you feeling now? In one or two sentences can you share your learnings today?

**Closing:** Invite children to make a paper *diya*, and exchange it with the person seated next to them while singing together the song – “This little Guiding Light of mine...” saying “We all have the capacity to choose to come forward and spread light in the darkness around us.” After all children have exchanged their *diyas*, place the *diyas* around the Centre.

#### **Lyrics of the song - This little guiding light of mine**

This little guiding light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine (3)  
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

Take my little light round the world, I'm gonna let it shine (3)  
Let it shine, all the time, let it shine!

## 11. Conflict resolution -II

Adapted from Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice, A Circle a Day - 170 Scaffolded Questions (2015).

### Opening

“A conversation in which the two parties have different beliefs should never begin with the intention of converting the other party to your own beliefs. Every worthwhile conversation’s goal should be to understand the other person’s opinions and help them understand your own.” -Emily Eskowich

**Check-in:** Share your name and a feeling as you walked into the Circle today?

**Guidelines and Values:** *Remind the children about the guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre.*

### Read out this story:

Sunand is 15 years old. He has left school and is now helping his father in his tailoring shop. Sunand has an older brother and a younger sister. Since Sunand has started helping his father in the tailoring shop, he thought he could take care of himself and hence made decisions for himself. But Sunand’s mother, a homemaker, often disagreed with him and they had arguments everyday. Sunand threatened his mother that he would leave the house and live independently. His father provided for the home, but did not interfere in these arguments, as he spent the evenings with his friends. The following are some of the disagreements Sunand and his mother have with each other:

1. Sunand watches movies till late night and is unable to wake up early in the morning to open the tailoring shop.
2. As of late, Sunand is spending his evenings with a gang of boys who are much older than him.
3. Sunand borrows bikes from his gang of friends and comes home very late at night.
4. Sunand has grown his hair long and coloured it. The neighbours keep taunting his mother telling her that growing and colouring hair is not part of their culture and that he looks like a rowdy.

### OR

Rekha is 15 years old. She was forced to leave school to help her father in his tailoring shop. She has an older brother and a younger sister. She had constant clashes with her mother who did not approve of her friends, her interest in dance, or her style of dressing. Rekha once threatened her mother that she would leave the house and go live with her friend. Her father provided for the home, but did not interfere much and spent the evenings with his friends. The following are some of the reasons why she has arguments with her mother:

1. Rekha has been spending a lot of time chatting with older boys online.
2. She borrows money from her friends to buy Western clothes and make-up.
3. Rekha has coloured her hair. The neighbours keep taunting his mother telling her that colouring her hair and talking to boys is not part of their culture and that she looks like a loose character.

### Rounds

1. There must have been many times that you have had disagreements with other people in your life. Share about the feelings you experienced when you disagreed with someone? If you feel comfortable,

please share the incident as well.

2. What did you do/do you usually do when you disagree with someone?
3. Looking back, could you have expressed your disagreement differently? If yes, how?

**Check-out:** What are you taking away from the Circle today about dealing with conflict?

**Closing:**

[\*\*The Conflict Resolution Song | Ubongo Kids | From the kids of Africa to the World\*\*](#)

**Activity:** Divide children in a group of four or five. Give each group one chart paper, and some crayons, and tell them to draw an imaginary creature. Everyone has to add a feature of the creature based on their own imagination and creativity. Tell them to let their imagination go wild! Explain that the group's collective drawing could start as a drawing of a human by one person, but could end up having a tail of a lion, etc. Tell each group to show their creation to everyone. The idea of this activity is to enable children to work collaboratively and come up with something totally new together.

## 12. Recognising and Regulating Anger

**Materials:** Pressure cooker, emotion words (see table below).

**Opening:** “Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned.” Buddha

**Check-in:** How are you feeling? If you were an animal, what animal would best describe how you are feeling?

**Values and Guidelines:** Remind the children about the Guidelines and the need to adhere to the values. Ask them if they would like to add any new values. If there are any new values that are offered, follow the process of gaining understanding, consensus, and commitment. Then write it on a similar paper/paper plate and place it around the Centre.

**Preparation:** As preparation for the Circle, the Keeper can either bring a pressure cooker or the picture of it and use this to give the analogy of anger being built up in a person. The fire and the steam building up in the cooker are reasons for the anger to build up. The whistle allows for anger to be let out and vented. If this cooker were not to be functioning properly or letting out steam it would eventually burst. Inside the cooker you can place underlying feeling words that could be a cause for the anger

Print or write the following words on thick paper and put them inside a pressure cooker.

<b>hurt</b>	<b>threatened</b>	<b>hateful</b>
<b>mad</b>	<b>aggressive</b>	<b>frustrated</b>
<b>skeptical</b>	<b>suspicious</b>	<b>withdrawn</b>
<b>embarrassed</b>	<b>infuriated</b>	<b>hostile</b>
<b>provoked</b>	<b>enraged</b>	<b>furious</b>
<b>violated</b>	<b>resentful</b>	<b>jealous</b>
<b>insecure</b>	<b>devastated</b>	<b>grief</b>
<b>attacked</b>	<b>offended</b>	<b>shamed</b>
<b>alone</b>	<b>anxious</b>	<b>nervous</b>
<b>guilt</b>	<b>disrespected</b>	<b>disappointed</b>
<b>uncomfortable</b>	<b>regret</b>	<b>worried</b>
<b>grumpy</b>	<b>trapped</b>	<b>suffocated</b>
<b>scared</b>	<b>sad</b>	<b>helpless</b>
<b>unsure</b>	<b>tricked</b>	<b>pressured</b>
<b>disgusted</b>		

## Rounds

1. Share a story of a time when you felt very angry and felt your emotions burst like a pressure cooker. (Prompts can be a time when there was unjust treatment, criticism, or the child was denied what he wanted or deserved.)

*Take out the emotion cards from the cooker and place them on the floor around the Centre. Invite the children to walk slowly around the Centre where they are placed and pick up the emotion cards (like drops of steam) that they think could have triggered or caused their anger based on the story they have just shared.*

2. Share with us the card you picked and how it was linked to the time you got angry. Place the emotion card in the pressure cooker after you finish sharing.
3. What are you thinking now about that situation?

**Activity:** Divide the children in groups of 2 or 3 and ask them to share with each other what are some of the ways in which they have calmed themselves down when they sensed anger. The Keeper can hand them a sheet with some suggestions on what they could say to themselves and ask them to add more. Take into account the literacy levels and ensure that the statements are read out if the children need assistance. The suggestions could be as follows:

- It's okay to feel anger, but now I need to keep calm.
- Is this person/situation really worth getting into trouble for?
- We don't always have to agree with each other and people can have different views about the

matter.

- I don't need to prove myself in this situation. I can stay calm.
- It's impossible to control other people and situations. The only thing I can control is myself and how I express my feelings.
- If people criticize me, it is their opinion - it is not necessarily the truth about me.
- This is not how I will always feel.
- Is there another way of letting the other person know what I am feeling?
- I know anger is not a solution to the problem. What can I do to solve this problem?
- What will the consequences of my behaviour be?
- What would someone I look up to do in this situation?
- This may be a big deal for me right now. Will it matter as much six months down the line or after 2 years?
- How can I make the situation better for myself without hurting the other person?

*After the completion of the activity, invite the children to return to the Circle.*

4. What could you say to yourself or do to help you better regulate your anger?

**Check-out:** What are you taking away from the Circle today?

### **Closing**

“Use your anger for good. Anger to people is like gas to the automobile - it fuels you to move forward and get to a better place. Without it, we would not be motivated to rise to a challenge. It is an energy that compels us to define what is just and unjust.” - Arun Gandhi, The Gift of Anger