

Peace Camp – Peace Circles

Daily peace circles provide an opportunity for your family to build connection, share feelings, and mediate conflicts in healthy, respectful ways. Regular participation in peace circles can give children (and adults!) practical experience in using respectful and healthy communication for relationship building, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

On this first day you will practice the peace circle process. If you have never done this before, it might feel a little awkward! But feel free to giggle and let everyone feel the discomfort. It will get easier as the week goes on. Choose a time and place for your family circle: maybe before or after dinner, right before bed, or in the morning. Agreeing to a set time will make it more likely that you all will begin to build the peace circle habit. Plan a time when all family members can be present.

Sit together in a circle in a comfortable spot. It can be around the table, on the floor, in the living room, or out on the lawn. Choose a place where your family can hear one another, be free of distractions, and feel at ease. You don't need anything special for a circle except a talking piece, but you might like to have a candle, a bell, or something else to build a ritual around the circle experience.

The talking piece is an essential part of the peace circle. Only the person with the talking piece is allowed to speak at a given moment. Everyone else listens while this person speaks. Typically, in a peace circle the person with the talking piece can talk for as long as they need, without being interrupted. They also can say whatever they want, without interruption or critique. If you have a "big talker" in your family, you might like to have one of your shared values be "speak leanly" or some other way of encouraging people to speak in ways that still leave space for others.

Anything can be a talking piece. Choose a stuffed animal, a favorite book, grab a stick off the ground, or make a talking stick (see the peace camp resources for today). Attached you will see a "script" for the first circle. Each day's downloads will include a script for that day's circle. Feel free to download them all at once or just go day by day.

Opening Circle – Day One

Everyone sits together in a circle. If you choose, you might place in the center of the circle a blanket with a variety of talking pieces, a candle, a bell, a family picture, or anything else that will create a sense of connection and peace.

For today's circle you should also have several pieces of paper, note cards, or paper plates (one for each family member) and pens/pencils or crayons.

Some of your children have participated in peace circles before. If so, ask your child to share the "rules" of the circle with the rest of the family. Or else you can explain the circle process.

Explain that in a peace circle everyone has a chance to talk without being interrupted. When it is time to share, the talking piece will be passed around the circle and only the person holding the talking piece will be the one to talk. When finished, they pass the talking piece to the next person in the circle. If you do not want to talk when it's your turn, you can say "pass" and pass the talking piece to the next person. Everyone has the chance to talk, but no one HAS to talk. (Sorry, parents, kids get to pass! As time goes by and they learn to trust that they really will be heard, you might be surprised that even teenagers start to open up.)

Open the circle: If you have a candle, you can light the candle now or ring the bell or have everyone clap together three times to indicate you are now opening the circle. You can choose your own opening and closing ritual.

Practice using the talking piece by asking everyone this question: **If you were a super hero, would you rather have the power to be invisible or to fly?** Pass the talking piece around the circle so everyone has the chance to answer.

Then go around the circle again with the question: What have been a high (good thing) and a low (not so good thing) about the week for you?

Today you will work together as a family to set guidelines for the circle. Pass out the paper/cards/paper plates and crayons/pens/pencils. Whoever is leading the

circle can say: “In order to have a circle where everyone can talk we will need some shared guidelines.”

For older children: Pass out the paper plates and crayons. Ask them to divide the plate into quadrants and then write down four different things they will need in order to feel safe and heard in the circle. Then have the kids choose the one thing on their plate that is MOST important to them. Pass around the talking piece and have each person share all of the things on their paper/plate, including which is the most important and why. As each person finishes speaking, they will put their plate in the center of the circle. These can be put in the center each time you have a family circle, as a reminder of the shared guidelines.

For younger kids: Tell them that today is their stuffed animal’s first time in a peace circle. Ask “can you tell us something that you can do for your animal friend that would help him/her feel happy and safe in the peace circle?” Write down each item the children say on a piece of paper and put in the center of the circle.

Then ask, with a thumbs up or a thumbs down, can we all agree to use these guidelines for how we talk to each other this week?

Additional questions:

- What is one thing that you find peaceful at home?
- What is one thing that you think would make our home more peaceful?
(Use responses to fill in “If for one day” worksheet)
- Today’s peace maker pledge: I pledge to join together big and small. What does this mean to you?
- If it your family’s practice to pray, you can do a final round of the circle inviting everyone to say a “God thanks...” and “God help...” prayer.

Ring the bell, blow out the candle, or all clap together to close the circle.

Peace Circle – Tuesday

Set up the circle with your blanket, talking piece and the paper plates with the guidelines.

Open the circle in whatever way your family chose.

Check in: Share highs and lows from the past day (one thing that was a favorite, one thing that wasn't so great).

Questions:

- What is one of your favorite books, movies, or TV shows? What do you like about it?
- Who is a character in a book, movie, or TV show who is very different from you? What do you like about that character?
- What is one way our family can get to know people who are different from us?
- Finish this sentence, “If for one day my city was more at peace _____” (Write down answers on the “if for one day” worksheet)
- Today's Peace Pledge is “I pledge to respect people in each and every land.” What do you think this means?
- Is there anything else you want to share with the family today?
- *If it is your practice, end with a God thanks/God help prayer.*

Read this quotation: “Imagine what our real neighbors would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. ... Sometimes, all it takes is one kind word to nourish another person. Think of the ripple effect that can be created when we nourish someone. One kind, empathetic word has a wonderful way of turning into many.”

— Fred Rogers, **The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember**

Close the circle in whatever way your family chose.

Peace Circle – Wednesday

Open the circle.

Checking in: Share highs and lows.

Questions:

- When you get in an argument with someone, how does that make you feel?
- What is one way to peacefully solve disagreements?
- What is one conflict that comes up in our family?
- What is one way we could try to solve that conflict peacefully?
- Finish this sentence, “If for one day my country was more at peace....”
(write the responses on the worksheet)
- Today’s Peace Pledge: I pledge to use my words to speak in a kind way.
What is one way you can do that this week?
- Is there anything else you want to share with the family today?
- *If it is your practice, end with a God thanks/God help prayer.*

Close the circle.

Peace Circle – Thursday

Open the circle.

Checking in: Share highs and lows

Questions:

- What is one of your favorite places in nature? How do you feel when you are there?
- What is a part of nature that you are worried is in trouble?
- Today's peace pledge: "I pledge to care for the earth with my healing heart and hands."
- What is one thing you think our family can do to help take care of nature/creation?
- Finish this sentence, "If for one day our world was more at peace..." (write the responses on the worksheet).
- Is there anything else you want to share with the family today?
- *If it is your practice, end with a God thanks/God help prayer.*

Close the circle.

Peace Circle -- Friday

Open the circle.

Checking in: Share highs and lows.

Questions:

- What has been your favorite part about virtual peace camp this week?
- What is one thing we have done this week that you want to keep doing?
- Finish this sentence, “If for one day I was more at peace...” (write the responses on the worksheet).
- Today’s peace pledge:
- I pledge to do my part to create peace for one and all. I pledge to help other as I go throughout my day. What is one thing we can do to help others this week?
- Is there anything else you want to share with the family today?
- *If it is your practice, end with a God thanks/God help prayer.*

You may choose to close with this blessing. Have everyone put their hands together in the circle and have someone read:

God, bless these hands,
That they might be used for helping and not hurting
That they might be used for hugging and not hitting
That they might always be held with love
May our hands be your hands in the world, making peace. Amen

Close the circle.