



## Story Circle Process and Guidelines

**There are 4 parts to a story circle.**

Part 1 – Introductions and explaining the guidelines

Part 2 - Listening & telling

Part 3 – Crosstalk

Part 4 – Transformative action

Be aware of how much time you have for the whole process: Make sure you know to include time and instructions for how you will break up into small groups if you have more than 8 people, and what time your circle is to re-join the larger group (if there is one), or what time the whole session needs to end. The facilitator should re-cap these time factors to the circle.

1. **Always sit in a circle;** make the circle a "good" circle", not oval or jagged. Being in a circle is important. In a circle everyone is an equal, and you can see everybody –so it's easier to listen.
2. **Always introduce everybody.** The facilitator of the circle should introduce themselves to the group, and then moving clockwise from that person, each person states their name and gives a VERY BRIEF introduction of themselves (where from, what organization they are with).
3. **Be transparent about the purpose and theme for the circle.** If there is to be a theme given for the stories, the facilitator explains the theme and answers any questions about that theme or about the process itself. This matters so that the participants can support the reason for the gathering. Don't get too worried about the theme though, because the only person who really needs to concern themselves with the theme is the person telling the first story.
4. **Only one person speaks at a time.** As the circle proceeds, there will be no "cross circle" talk, questions or commenting on the story just told. After the circle is complete and everyone that might have passed has had a chance to tell a story, then there will be a "cross circle questioning, commenting and dialogue" time.
5. **The first story is the "seed" that grows what stories get told.** The facilitator may have prompted some one to tell the first story, or the facilitator may call for the first story and anyone in the circle may begin with a story, it depends on the facilitator, the purpose of the circle or how well the people know each other.
6. **The most important part of story telling is the listening.** Listening is more important than talking. Don't spend time thinking of what your story will be; just actively listen to the stories. Trust that the circle will bring you a story. If several stories come to you as you are listening, go for the one that is the "deepest", that you feel comfortable telling.

7. **Have a timekeeper and share time equally.** Decide on the number of minutes for each story; **we suggest three minutes.** Choose the method of time keeping; will there be one timekeeper or will you pass the watch around the circle. Decide on what the signal will be when the time is up; the storyteller doesn't have to stop abruptly, just finish up the story.
8. **The story circle will proceed clock-wise from the first storyteller.**
9. **You can pass, you don't have to speak.** If it's your turn to share a story and you don't have a story to tell it's ok – just say "pass". Anyone who passes will have another chance to share at the end of the circle.
10. **The stories you tell should be STORIES,** not political theories, general histories, or your opinion on the theme, or your opportunity to lecture. A story can be your story or the story of a family member, friend or acquaintance.
11. **Be Present.** Turn off cell phones, don't text or tweet while participating. Do not take notes while in the circle. Do not hold books or papers in your lap. Concentrate on listening.
12. **Silence is OK,** in fact it is good. As the stories pass around the circle it is OK for there to be silence after one story is complete and before the next person begins; this gives that person, and the circle, time to reflect on the story they just heard, and it gives the next person time to land on his/her story, or decide to pass without pressure.
13. **Respect.** You don't have to like the story someone has to tell, but you have to respect their right to tell it.
14. If your circle has time for more than one circle of stories, then at the end of the circle, do it again - again ending with an opportunity for those who have passed if they now have a story. They may, or they may pass again.
15. **Cross Talk** - After everyone who is going to tell has spoken, open the circle for the "cross circle questioning, commenting and dialogue. You need to have decided how long you have for that phase of the circle and keep to that time.
16. **Snapshots** - You May do a "Snap shot" to capture what you hear in the stories people share. Take a moment to collect the sensations, thoughts, images, and feelings you have as the result of listening. This can happen after a round of stories be told, before or after crosstalk.
17. **Transformative action** –Finally, always end the circle with an opportunity for people to do something with what has been shared. The action can be small and simple, like sharing a thought or feeling; creative and artistic – like writing a poem



## **Core Values of Junebug Productions, Inc.**

### ***Listening***

Listening is an essential element of community building. We uncover what is important to each other through active listening.

### ***Valuing the presence of being***

Each and every being has a spirit that is special. Any moment one is able to experience simply being is sacred and worth celebrating. Engaging with feeling whatever facilitates noticing the fact of our existence, and the source of that presence is essential to our development.

### ***We honor our roots; celebrating Black culture and traditions***

Cultural misappropriation and exploitation occurs when we don't honor our roots. Our work is influenced by the multidisciplinary Jali traditions of West Africa. Our work came out of the SNNC Freedom Summer project of 1963. Which is born of people surviving, fighting against and transcending beyond white supremacy.

### ***Our work is in solidarity with oppressed people working for justice***

Our teachers are everyday Black Women and Men from the rural US deep south. We honor the lives and sacrifices of our teachers by using this work to contribute to the struggle for justice.

### ***Respect***

You don't have to like what someone has to say, but you have to respect their right to share it.

### ***We honor Learning from the oral tradition***

The experiences of our lives are the text for our lessons. Our presence, understandings, lenses, reflections and relationships matter in our learning process; as much as the content of what we learn matters. We are all teachers and learners.

### ***Strong Democratic Leadership***

Create intentional spaces for people to gather to build collective power for liberation.

### ***We value and honor Stories***

Greater understanding comes from sharing stories and personal truths rather than primarily relying on debate and argument.