

Story Circle Guide

Simple format, safety practices, and facilitator scripts

Purpose

Story circles create a respectful space for people to share real experiences, listen deeply, and build understanding. This guide offers a light structure you can use anywhere — homes, workplaces, faith spaces, or online.

Core Principles

- Stories are gifts. Consent and dignity come first.
- Listening is active. Advice and debate are paused.
- Confidentiality. What's shared in the circle stays in the circle.
- Opt-in. Passing is always welcome.

Roles

- **Host:** Welcomes, sets tone, reads prompts, keeps pace.
- **Timekeeper:** Gently manages time with signals.
- **Participants:** Share, listen, support, or pass.

Safety & Care Guidelines

- Begin with a clear *welcome & agreements* (below).
- Invite content warnings if helpful ("brief heads up if heavy topics").
- Normalize passing: "You may pass or pause at any time."
- Use people-first, nonjudgmental language.
- Have local support resources ready (hotline, campus/community services).
- Close intentionally; offer grounding and debrief time.

If someone becomes distressed: pause, breathe, ask what they need, and offer a break.
It's okay to end early or shift the plan.

Suggested Format (60–90 minutes)

Segment	Minutes	Notes
Welcome & Agreements	10	Land, review principles, quick check-in.
Warm-up Prompt (optional)	10	Pairs or quick round-robin.
Main Sharing Round	30–50	2–4 minutes each, pass allowed.
Reflections	10	Share appreciations or insights (no cross-talk).
Closing	5–10	Grounding practice; next steps; gratitude.

Opening Script (Read Aloud)

"Welcome. Thank you for being here. In this circle, we slow down to share experiences and listen with care. You are always free to pass. Please avoid advice, fixing, or debate — we honor whatever people choose to bring. What's shared here stays here. If you need a break, take one. We'll time shares gently so everyone has space."

Prompts Menu

Connection

- Tell us about a time a stranger changed your day.
- Share a moment you felt truly seen.

Healing

Reflection

- What feels different for you now than a year ago?
- Who taught you something you still carry?

- What helped you keep going during a hard season?
 - Share something you're learning to forgive.
- Hope**
- Describe a small action that gave you hope.
 - What does "home" mean to you today?

Ground Rules (Post or Read)

- Share from "I" experience; no advice without consent.
- One voice at a time; we keep stories off social media.
- Time awareness so all can participate.
- Assume good intent; attend to impact; repair when needed.

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Choose an accessible location (ramps, restrooms, seating options).
- Offer text or quiet channels for sharing.
- Provide translation/interpretation when possible.
- Invite pronouns and name preferences without pressure.

Closing Options (Choose One)

- One word you're leaving with.
- Hand on heart; three breaths together.
- Gratitude round: "Thank you for..."

Host Checklist

- Confirm time, space/Zoom, access needs, and reminders.
- Print or share agreements and prompts.
- Bring timer, water, tissues, and resource list.

- Invite a timekeeper if group > 6.
- Follow-up: gratitude note; optional feedback form.

Planning Worksheet

Circle Theme

Date & Time

Location / Link

Access Notes

Prompts

Support Resources

Threads of Connection • threadsofconnection25@gmail.com