

How to Host a Heart Circle

The magic is in the intention.

A Heart Circle is the central component of all Colorado ManREACH gatherings, potlucks and one-day events. It is a safe, accepting space that we create as a group so each of us can speak openly and honestly, be heard without judgment and enjoy the support of our community.

The key to a Heart Circle is found in the intention we bring to it. Here is a place far removed from the demands of our daily lives where we can meet, share our true feelings and witness others' stories without being judged, interrupted or offered advice. There are few places like it, and from this it draws its power.

As the host, you can choose to lead the Heart Circle or ask another individual to do so. The facilitator of the circle should embrace his role by setting the tone, opening and closing the circle, and ensuring the comfort and well-being of participants throughout. (See the guidelines on the following page.)

- **Preparation** - Arrange seating (chairs, backjacks, pillows, etc.) in a circle. A small table or floor cloth may be placed in the center with a bell for opening and closing the circle, an object (talisman) that can be passed from person to person such as a stone or talking stick, and any other decoration you wish.
- **Opening the Heart Circle** - Ask participants to “get comfortable and relax.” Allow a minute or two for people to quiet their minds and become present while you explain the purpose of a Heart Circle and review the guidelines on the following page. Once everyone is ready, ring the bell and ask anyone who would like to start to take an object from the center of the circle and begin.
- **During the Heart Circle** - The individual who convenes the Heart Circle is responsible for keeping things moving along. If you feel the group needs to be reminded of a guideline, such as “speaking in I statements”, you may do so at the appropriate time and in a supportive manner.
- **Length of a Heart Circle** - While there is no specific time limit for a Heart Circle, you should allow enough time for the talisman to go around the circle at least twice. This provides the opportunity for deeper sharing among participants, including allowing those who might not feel comfortable speaking in the first round to share what they're feeling.
- **Closing the Heart Circle** - Once the final round of the Heart Circle has been completed, the facilitator holds the talisman in his hand, and walks around the circle giving an opportunity for participants to make a closing comment. Once complete, thank everyone and ring the bell. Be sure to allow a few minutes after the circle for people to transition to what's next.



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HEART CIRCLE

Your truth is welcome here!

- **Be present.** Relax. Breathe. Have no distractions. Turn all technology off.
- **Speak from your heart about what you are feeling right now.** Own your feelings (“I feel...” is a good way to begin). You can choose not to speak if you have nothing to say.
- **Listen to others.** Witness what they are sharing.
- **Respect others.** Be accepting and nonjudgmental. Honor confidentiality.
- **One person speaks, others listen.** No crosstalk or fixing. Show agreement by “hissing”. Put your hand to your ear if you can’t hear.
- **Take care of yourself.** Come and go quietly in between sharings.
- **Whoever begins the circle, ends the circle** and ensures the spirit and safety of the circle are maintained throughout.



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