

Quick Tips for Facilitating a Drum and Rhythm Circle

Prior to the day of the circle:

1. Know who your participants will be. If you are going to be doing the circle for the first time, ask about whom you will be with. It is important to know if you will be working with adults and/or children. It is also important to know if participants will have physical and/or cognitive challenges. Knowing this will help you plan a circle in which everyone can participate and be comfortable.
2. Know the goal of the circle. A circle for a support group of cancer survivors and their family members will have a different goal than one for at risk youth. Talk with whoever contacted you to facilitate the circle and ask about the goal of the circle. If you are leading a circle which happens on a regular schedule –you will want to identify the goal of the upcoming circle in order to assist you in planning the music you bring, the way to begin and end the circle and potentially even the instruments you set out for use.
3. Ask if anyone will be available to help you set up and assist during the circle.

The day of the circle:

1. Set up the area prior to the activity. Arrange the chairs, get out the CD player if you will be using one, get your CD in, have your attendance sheets and evaluation sheets ready with a pen and the instruments available.
2. Welcome participants as they arrive.
3. Introduce yourself and explain a little about the benefits of drum and rhythm circles. Adapt this to fit the group participating and their level of interest and ability to process the information.
4. You may choose to do a brief wellness exercise such as deep breathing or a few stretches.
5. Start with an icebreaker such as passing an instrument or shaker. You can also ease participant's anxieties while having fun by having people clap or thump their chest with one hand to their heartbeat. Explain that everyone already has rhythm!
6. Review how simple it is to drum by showing a center flat hand tone, a side of the drum head tap and a circular drum head rub. Demonstrate.
7. Once everyone has a drum or instrument-play along to a CD, pass a rhythm around the circle, have people play their names and the group repeat, play a rhythm and have the group play it back.
8. If you are facilitating a support group –you will want to assist the participants with addressing issues by asking people to: play the sound of a hard day, or the sound of what they have had to give up etc. Ask if they will share with the group what their rhythm meant. Some people will want to share and others will not. Allow time for others in the circle to offer words of support to the player and each other.
9. You may choose to include drumming to guided imagery at this point.
10. Conclude with a brief wellness exercise which can be deep breathing, stretching, or belly laughs.
11. Ask how everyone feels. Ask if anyone feels different than when they joined the circle and if they are willing to share. Allow time for participants to share their feelings now that they have participated.
12. Thank everyone for coming and if you will be facilitating again, invite them to come back. Thank them for what they have shared with you and each other.
13. If formal evaluations are indicated-pass these out and encourage participants to complete them.