

# Circle of Support

A workshop to explore who will stand with you

## Overview

The idea of an active support network is really an old idea in our society. For people with disabilities, Circles of Support is an idea and practice that has been around for over 25 years. It is not a service or program but rather a group of people who are intentionally invited to come together in friendship and support of a person with disability, for the purpose of achieving their goals and protecting their interests into the future. Circles of Support can enable: more people in the life of each individual who are not paid to be there, an increase in the number of new and positive roles that people hold, reconnection with family members, expanded social and economic opportunities, an important safeguard for the future and a better life.

This course assists participants to understand Circles of Support so that they can be of authentic value to people who are vulnerable by exploring the motivations, intent, facilitation, energies and shortcomings of Circles of Support. This course will also assist participants to avoid turning the concept into yet another trend, fad or agency mechanism.

In this workshop participants will learn about:

- Intentions and possible purposes of a Circle of Support,
- The benefits of Circles of Support,
- The key dimensions for a successful Circle of Support,
- The practicalities,
- How to recruit, invite and support Circle members,
- How to take the steps to start or strengthen a Circle of Support,
- The possible limitations and how to overcome common areas of challenge, and
- How to engage a vision for an inclusive life.

Participants will also hear some “real life” stories from people who have a Circle of Support. This is a practical workshop and will use interactive exercises, reflection and discussion!

## Who is this workshop for?

People with a disability, friends, families, allies, advocates, professionals

## Feedback from this workshop

Supportive, informative, enlightening, positive, energetic, interactive, insightful, empowerment, changed perspective, surprising, hope for the future, practical, informal circle and range of skills required, thought provoking, warm and open to everyone’s ideas, inspiring, feeling connected and welcome, sharing, hearing how a couple of circles worked, the speakers - loved them, learning about roles framework, fears and addressing them, parent sharing, hands on stuff, fun learning!

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## Presenters

**Deb Rouget** is the CEO of Belonging Matters. For nearly 30 years, she has been involved in the lives of people with a disability and their families and has gained much practical experience and wisdom about imagining and designing supports that enable people with a disability to have typical opportunities in the community. Through her work at Belonging Matters, she instigated the Building Community Networks project which facilitates Circles of Support. In this project, through actively facilitating a number of Circles of Support, Deb has learnt what it takes to establish, maintain and harness people's enthusiasm and skills to enable a full, meaningful and inclusive life.

**Teresa Micallef** has always chosen to work at the cutting edge of change in community, and has worked alongside people with disabilities and their families for over 20 years. She has been the Coordinator of a family governed service called Living Distinctive Lives for the past 9 years. Currently she is the Project Manager of Building Community Networks and has been impressed by the power, creativity and resilience of people who experience disability, their families and networks. In just a short time, she has seen the incredible impact of engaging positively with a person's Circle of Support and how it can lead to the creation of a good life and safeguard the future.

## Learning outcomes

This course will enable participants to:

- Define the intentions of a Circle of Support
- Discern the possible missions of a Circle of Support
- Identify and discern the key dimensions of a Circle of Support (mission, purpose, duration, function, operation, membership)
- Illustrate key methods used to recruit Circle of Support members
- Identify the supports necessary for a Circle of Support to succeed
- Identify potential limitations and possible difficulties of Circles of Support
- Design safeguards around Circle of Supports

## Teaching methods

- Practical exercises
- Presentation of theory and methods via Powerpoint
- Discussion
- Brainstorming
- Individual reflection and group work
- Sharing inspiring "real life" stories of people who have developed Circles of Support
- Handouts

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Image courtesy: Julian Block of Unsplash

## **Duration**

One day (9.30am-4.30pm)

## **Cost**

Melbourne based

Under 15 participants - AU\$1300.00 (Plus GST)

15-40 participants - AU\$2,400 (Plus GST).

Plus travel, meal and accommodation costs if required.

Guest speakers can be arranged at an extra cost to share their personal story e.g. family members. Variations can be arranged. Reductions may be negotiated for individuals or family groups

## **For further information**

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