

Tip Sheet

Invitation

Circles of Support Asking

Asking is... “the deliberate and conscious act of approaching others and in so doing seeking an involvement that previously wasn’t there” (Ric Thompson). Asking and inviting people is often the biggest hurdle! Getting your vision, qualities and commitment clear helps you to decide who to invite. It can also clarify what you are asking from people when you invite them!



Who should you ask?

There are so many people who could be invited to your circle meeting. Think beyond immediate family. Consider extended family, friends, people you know in your community and from places of shared interest. Consider people you don’t know yet, but who may have shared interests, skills you require, or who could contribute to the purpose of your circle. For example, if you’re interested in computers you may invite an IT expert.



Think about people who...

- Can make a positive contribution and match the purpose and intent of your Circle of Support,
- Hold similar values and ideals and fit your vision (e.g. culture, beliefs, high regard, positive views, belief in inclusion etc),
- Have knowledge about or share your interests,
- Have skills that make a contribution,
- Are of a similar age,
- Could advocate or provide a safeguard for the future. For example, think about how younger people could be involved,
- Might bring new or fresh ideas,
- Have time to offer,
- Work well in a group or collective,
- Are well connected to and value community.

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Circles of Support Asking!



Avoid

Inviting people so you have a large group,
Relying just on family,
Inviting people who might have a conflict of interest or bias e.g. support workers, service providers,
Forgoing your values to suit others,
Inviting people because you feel obliged,
Assuming someone won't want to participate,
Making a decision for someone e.g. they're too busy.



What's the Commitment?

Think about the commitment you would like from Circle members e.g. where will meetings be held, when, how often, how long they will go for and what members will need to do in and outside of meetings? It is important to put a time limit on the meeting length and stick to it! We have found a two-hour meeting, every two months is very doable for people.



Ways to invite people

There are a number of ways you can invite people e.g. in person, on the phone or a written invitation. Prior to inviting people, write down how you will ask potential Circle members and practice!



Art of Asking Tips from Ric Thompson (2014)

Why are you asking?
Be clear about your purpose (e.g. my primary goal is to get a paid job),
Be clear about what you are asking for,
Make the ask simple,
Consider where is the best place to ask and when e.g. avoid asking a person who is a chef at her restaurant during lunch time,
Who is the most appropriate person to do the asking?
Think about your attitude e.g. "no one will come or have time" or "people love spending time together and making a positive contribution,"
Identify and be honest about your barriers or fears in regard to asking and how you might move through them.

Further Information

Visit our web site: www.belongingmatters.org

Tip Sheet: Circles of Support - Meeting Tips

Our periodicals: "Thinking About Circles of Support" and "Thinking About the Art of Asking"

Circle of Support and Microboards (COSAM) web site www.cosam.org.au

Video: "Brodie's Circle of Support" (view on the COSAM web site)

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