

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

Sharing Circle Materials

Children Who Are Exposed to Family Violence



*"We believe in a world free from
violence and abuse."*

June 10, 2003

Children Who Witness Violence Training Seminar

Sharing Circle Resource Manual

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ARE YOU A VOLCANO? Exercise

Direction:

- I. Discuss violent or abusive ways that anger is sometimes expressed. List all the ideas the child or group of children suggest. Talk about the terms "violence" and "abuse" if needed. Establish the difference between feeling angry (which is O.K.) and abusive behaviour (which is not O.K.). Discuss the damage that is caused by abusive behaviour.
- II. Ask child or children to create an erupting volcano on paper or by using clay, playdough or plasticine.
- III. Direct the child or children to print words on the flames of the volcano to show what happens during an explosion of anger. Print words on the lava flow to show what damage can result. If using a medium such as clay or plasticine, write words on strips of paper and use a push pin to attach each to the corresponding area on the volcano.

Materials required:

Blank paper (8 ½" x 11" or bigger)

Markers, paints, pencils, crayons, paints (any of these) or clay, plasticine or playdough.

Questions:

Ask each child to comment on their own artwork, and seek comments from the rest of the group. Questions from group members can open up discussions about one's own fear about expressing anger, power and control tactics and the different types of abuse: physical, verbal, sexual and emotional.

This exercise can be used in individual counselling but works extremely well in a group. A very visual way to demonstrate how anger and the expression of this feeling is affecting the child's life. In assessment, often ways anger was expressed by the abuser are identified and brought to the surface to be explored. Offers insight into child's ability to connect his/her actions with the consequence it could have.

(Taken and adapted from "A Volcano in my Tummy" by Eliane Whitehouse and Warwick Pudney)

Awo Taan Native Woman's Shelter

"Sharing/Healing Circles As Our Tool"



In the Aboriginal culture the Sharing Circle is a traditional process used to deal with issues, healing, making decisions and arriving at consensus. Sharing Circles are a valuable tool that can be utilized in a number of interventions, such as family counselling, group work, mediation and conflict resolution. * Just a point of interest here, circles have different names. They are sometimes called "healing circles" or "talking circles", but they all have the same goal: providing loving support for someone. *

Often sacred objects such as a special rock (Grandfather), a talking stick or an Eagle Feather is passed around the circle as the Mom's and Children speak; Generally we incorporate some basis guidelines when facilitating Sharing Circles:

- Participants are requested to remain in the room and in the circle until everyone has finished speaking.
- The sacred object is passed clockwise or counter-clockwise (different Indigenous cultures move different ways around the Circle) to give each person this opportunity. As it is passed, this item reminds others unfamiliar with this process that the holder is the speaker at that moment.
- Everyone has the right to decide if they want to contribute. People can "pass" on their "turn," or may just choose to acknowledge the others present by saying, "I am here to listen and learn. Thank you."
- Active listening is very important work. Only one person speaks at a time.
- Negative criticism of other individuals is not appropriate. We are all both learners and teachers no matter the age. Critiques of ideas or attitudes should be discussed respectfully. Without respect, no one can learn.
- An effort should be made to stick to the matter under discussion and, in this way, honour other people's time and commitment for being there.

Sharing Circles are particularly respectful and non-judgmental of all involved. Everyone is viewed as being equal within the circle and everyone has a voice. Guidelines may need to be modified depending on the purpose of the circle and the needs of those involved.

We teach to the Moms that Sharing Circles can also be utilized in the home as a way of enhancing communication in the family: for example, to facilitate discussions around family and School issues, behavior, and problem solving.

Our Children's Sharing Circle's

Our children's Sharing circles are facilitated by one of our Shelter Elders and a Child Support Worker. The Elder says a prayer and then smudge with sage before the circle begins. Some of the topics will include Responsibility, Caring for each other, Native legends and the points behind them, Communication, and Respect to name a few. These topics are all told through the legends of old times.

Comments from children from ages 4 years of age and up, who have participated in Sharing Circles include: "I felt like I could be myself". "At first I was shy, but then I felt more comfortable".

Healing Circles for Outreach Clients:

Before we begin our healing circle we hold hands and the Elder says our Prayer. For those who are there for the first time and a brief overview of what a smudge is about and why we use it is explained. Just another point of interest here:

The burning of herbs for emotional, psychic, and spiritual purification is also common practice among many religious, healing, and spiritual groups. The ritual of smudging can be defined as "spiritual house cleaning." In theory, the smoke attaches itself to negative energy and as the smoke clears it takes the negative energy with it, releasing it into another space where it will be regenerated into positive energy.

We begin by using a shell or bowl with a fan or feather. We then smudge the room, slowly walking clockwise around the perimeter of the room, fanning the smudge pot, keeping it lit and wafting the smoke about. Smudge any medicine tool you will be using such as pipe, jewelry, outfit, etc.

Starting from the East and holding the smudge pot lit, each person can bathe themselves in the smoke. Many people smudge the heart area first, next the head area, and then the arms, then downward toward the legs. This isn't the only way you can smudge. It isn't wrong to smudge another way. We can purify and cleanse fairly regularly in this day and age with so much sickness and bad feelings around.

The purpose of our healing circles is to create a safe environment where the women can share as much of their pain, anguish or frustration as they want. It operates on a theory that when you are feeling down and out, angry, or disappointed there is someone out there you can talk to and help ease the heavy load off your mind. Each and every one within the circle has a quality that can help another person.

The healing circle means that everyone there, is there to support each other, and to let each other know they are not alone in their time of need. In the healing circle each person has a chance to say whatever is on their mind without being criticized

or judged. I would like to throw out a caution at this time with regards to disclosure of very personal information. Because what may be said is of a delicate nature to the individual, our healing circles always have an Elder and a counsellor co-facilitating in case there is a breakdown and some one on one is needed.

Topics brought to the Sharing Circles have included for the women spirituality, women's and men's issues, addiction recovery, sexuality - whatever they wish to bring to the circle in the spirit of consideration and kindness is respected and honoured.

Presentation

From

The Brenda Strafford Centre

By: Kathie Rolufs, BSW, RSW
Child and Youth Counsellor

Saying your name builds Self-Esteem

It gives ownership to your

MIND/BODY/SOUL

This in turn sets the foundation of

RIGHTS of WHO you are

Owning this Right allows you to set

your own boundaries

and when these boundaries are crossed

you have the RIGHT to say "NO"

With the RIGHT comes a responsibility

to care for your own

MIND/BODY/SOUL

Circles is setting Boundaries of

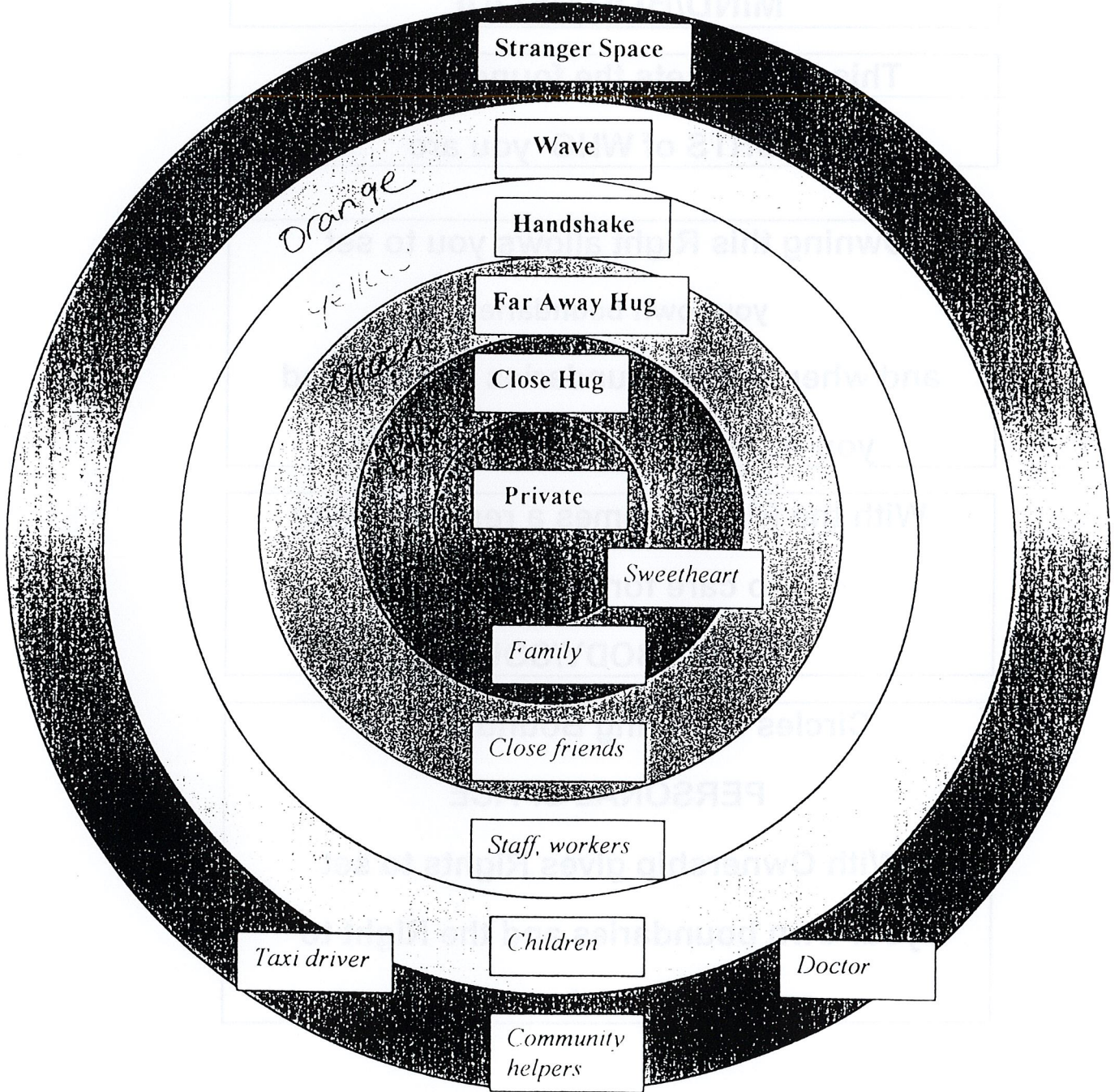
PERSONAL SPACE

With Ownership gives Rights to set

your own boundaries and the Right to

enforce those boundaries

CIRCLES



CALGARY WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER

CHILD THERAPY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

CHILD INFORMATION

Child's Name _____ Age _____
Date of Birth _____ Educational Level _____
Mother's Name _____ File # _____
Date Entering the Shelter _____ M/O Date _____

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Do you enjoy school? Why or why not?

What is your favorite class?

Do you belong to any clubs? Which ones or why not?

Do you enjoy these activities? Or would you like to be in a club – which one?

How do you get along with other kids at school?

How do you make friends at school? (look for social skills)

What do you like about your friends?

What do you not like about them?

Do your friends mistreat you? (do you know what that word means?) What do they do?

Do you mistreat your friends sometimes? What do you do? What would it look like if I saw it? (no judgments or “you shouldn’t”, just acceptance so it can change)

RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

What do you like about yourself?

What are you good at? (you must find answers here, if child cannot find any, list some that you have seen, and fact that they are answering questions so honestly).

What are you not so good at? (lighthearted and humorous – include something you are not so good at too!)

Is there anything that you would like to change about yourself? What would that be and why? If nothing to change, why not? (try to elicit “because I like myself”).

FAMILY INFORMATION

Who is in your family? (ask where Dad is out of curiosity)

Who do feel most comfortable and safe with?

Who do you get along with best?

What things are good about your family?

What things are not so good about your family?

What do you do for fun with your family?

If you had magical powers and could change anything about your family, what would you change? What else? How would that make you feel if it were changed? How does it make you feel that it is not that way?

What happens if you do something that your parent(s) don't like?

SHELTER AND VIOLENCE

Have you ever been to a shelter before?

What do people come here for?

What makes you happy to be here?

What makes you sad to be here?

What makes you scared to be here?

What makes you angry to be here?

What have you and your Mom come here to do? (get an idea of child's understanding of what they think they are here to do and what will happen after their stay here).

Have you ever been mistreated? By who? What happened? How did you feel? What did you think? What did you do? (take as long as it takes here.....be cognizant of child's choice to say as little or as much as they choose, leave long silences during which child is processing feelings, note body language, do not write during their account, just listen, details are not necessary, this is just time for the child to relay her/his experience of abuse). Use back of sheet if necessary.

Do you think it was your fault or that there was anything you could have done to prevent it? (assess perception of responsibility and reinforce that what happened was not the child's fault, but the abuser's and that there is nothing anyone can do to change an abuser's behavior unless they want to change – ask again if they understand what you mean by this and repeat if necessary).

If something like that were to happen again or if something else were to happen where you felt scared or that danger was about to happen, what could you do to keep yourself safe? (discuss safety plan, i.e. Kids Help Phone, give them a card they can hide in their shoe, school bag, etc., go to a safe neighbors, phone the police, etc.....)

Sometimes kids feel so sad, they think of hurting or killing themselves, when was a time you thought about that? (assume child has thought it, they will say no if they haven't but the door will be open to say yes if they have). When was the last time you thought about it seriously? How would you do it? (ask if they have the means available) When would you do it? What would have to happen so that you would think about it again? Who would miss you if you did it? (enlist many people here who would miss them that the child has mentioned, i.e. friends, grandparents, teachers, parent, siblings, pets, you, etc.....). Do you really want to die or just you want all of the hurt to go away?

FEELINGS AND SELF-CARE

What do you do to make yourself feel better? What sorts of things make you feel good about yourself? (help child come up with ideas and things they are already doing and enlist more they haven't thought of, they can write these up on a list and put them with the Kids help Phone card.)

When you are sad what do you do?

When you are mad.....

When you are scared.....

When you are hurt.....

When you feel lonely or alone.....

When you feel unsafe, how do you make yourself feel safe again? (talking to pets, calling someone, favorite blanket, safe imagery, etc.)

(looking for self-mutilating behaviors, internalizing, abusive behaviors, depressive feelings, hopelessness.....help child come up with ways to better express feelings and/or reinforce what they are already doing that is helpful....if child cannot come up with anything, ask them how they feel talking to you, if it is "o.k", suggest they try it again with you or others they trust, try to come up with one thing they can try that may be new, coach them through, step by step how they would do it, prepare for rejections, i.e. what would you do if you asked the teacher and she said no, not right now, maybe tomorrow...? Then who would you ask and so on.....?)

How do you feel now? Are you all right? It took a lot of courage to speak about this....

Thank you for talking to me. (After intake, many feelings have been stirred up, go play a fun, safe activity that is non-threatening with child and other kids).

OBSERVATIONS: (If anything is of concern, please note on this page)

Is child going to school? Does child report any physical ailments? (tummy aches, nightmares, bad dreams....). Any behavioural observations worth noting? I.e. hoarding food, lying, aggressive behaviour towards others, anxiety, shyness.....

Intake done by _____ - on _____ (date).