

# Facilitating a Restorative Circle of Hope

## Introduction

As the facilitator of a Circle, you hold the crucial role of creating a safe and respectful environment. Your task is to guide participants to speak their own truth and listen receptively to the truth of others, fostering an atmosphere of trust and understanding.

When the group members are comfortably seated in a circle, begin by inviting them to participate, reminding them that all voices are considered equally important.

If everyone is at ease with speaking, have each individual introduce themselves. Ask each couple to introduce themselves only. Allow for a natural flow during the introductions.

Welcome new participants upon joining. Ask existing members to introduce themselves briefly and encourage new members to do the same.

## Guidelines for Asking Open Questions

The group members should always address the center of the Circle and ask only honest, open questions. It is never appropriate to give unsolicited advice in a Circle.

To ensure that everyone understands how to participate appropriately, please download and print the Guidelines for Asking Open Questions from the Facilitator guide. Then, review the 11 guidelines to ensure that everyone is familiar with them.

**If a participant deviates from the guidelines during the discussion of a prompt for a Topic lesson, gently intervene and remind them by asking them to rephrase or restate their contribution in an honest, open question.**

## Circle of Hope Boundaries

Circles provide a safe and collaborative space for group members to share and build trust with each other openly. They are meant to be a restorative process for healing the spiritual trauma experienced by these families.

For circles to be restorative for those struggling with spiritual trauma, there must be clearly defined boundaries, the kinds of boundaries that create a safe space for the soul.

The Circle of Hope Boundaries are:

- **Give and receive welcome:** Support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

- **Be present as fully as possible:** Be here with your doubts, fears, failings, joys, and successes.
- **What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand:** Do what your soul calls you to and know that you do it with full support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.
- **Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.** Views of reality differ. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting that others will do their own sifting.
- **No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting:** This is the hardest guideline, but it is vital to welcome others' souls and make room for the Holy Spirit.
- **Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions.** You are not here to counsel or correct others. A link to download a guide to help you understand open questions is provided.
- **Be quick to listen and slow to speak:** If you feel judgmental or defensive, stop and ask yourself "I wonder questions." I wonder what brought them to this belief, what they're feeling right now, and what my reaction teaches me about myself.
- **Trust and learn from the silence:** Treat silence as a group member. After someone has spoken, breathe and take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
- **Observe deep confidentiality:** People feel safe only when they know whatever they say will remain with the people to whom they say it—whether within the group or outside the group.
- **Know that it is possible:** Believe that whatever you need when you arrive will be helped by the Holy Spirit to grow in the days ahead.

## **Circle of Hope Guiding Principles**

Parents with conflicting moral beliefs about their LGBTQ child's sexuality may feel isolated from their church community and their relationship with God.

Many parents often experience significant anxiety and struggle alone with fear, doubts, and a flood of questions.

Their motivation for joining a Circle is considering their next steps after the coming out.

The mission of Circles of Hope is to provide restoration for families dealing with this spiritual trauma.

No matter where families are in their journey or what beliefs they hold, prioritizing the relationship between them and their child is crucial.

**Amid this spiritual trauma, it is essential for parents to remember the 3 Guiding Principles of Hope, given the critical importance of the parent-child relationship.**

1. Play the “long game” and trust God with the outcome.
2. Use love to build bridges to Jesus; don’t lose the relationship.
3. You can love well without losing your convictions of faith.

## Reinforcing the Boundaries and Guiding Principles

These boundaries and guiding principles are so essential that parents in the Circle should be reminded of them before engaging in the discussion of a lesson.

Each lesson PDF file contains images of the Guiding Principles and the Circle of Hope Boundaries to assist you as the facilitator.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Play the “long game” and trust God with the outcome.
- Use love to build bridges to Jesus; don’t lose the relationship.
- You can love well without losing your convictions of faith.

