

IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE: CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Minimum Time Required: 75 minutes

Slide #2: Discourage → Courage

In the Circle of Courage, the word “courage” is seen as the opposite of “discourage.”

- ▶▶ Ask participants what words they think of when they hear the word “discourage” (put down, no, can’t, etc.). Write these words/phrases in a list on the left hand side of a piece of flip chart paper.
- ▶▶ Ask participants what the opposite of these words are (build up, yes, can, etc.). Write these words down on the right hand side of the paper opposite the words and phrases listed to their left.

The circle of courage is about building skills and providing opportunities, it is about creating wholeness.

Slide #3: Circle of Courage Graphic

Ask participants what they notice about the Circle of Courage graphic. *Do not share the aspects below before participants have a chance to notice them on their own.*

- ▶▶ One of the developers of the model is Native American (Lakota Sioux chief) – the image brings to mind a Native American medicine wheel.
- ▶▶ There are 4 quadrants – belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. The quadrants symbolize the quadrants of the globe; the seasons of the year.
- ▶▶ There is also the symbolism of the circle, found in many cultures. The circle itself represents the globe; the completion of a year; the cycle of life.

- ▶▶ The 4 main colors (red, yellow, white & black) represent the 4 winds or the 4 directions. Green and blue represent the earth and the sky.

Slide #4: Oh Hee Dee Kah

The Lakota word for courage is Ohitika (pronounced Oh Hee Dee Kah). If the group is not already split into 4 or 8 groups, participants may count off by syllable to form groups.

Slide #5: The Broken Circle

In a small group,

- 1) Define the section of the circle that is missing in the groups' own words, and*
- 2) Consider the impact on the whole when that section is not addressed.*

Allow groups time to discuss their section of the circle, then guide a large group conversation to synthesize the learning.

- ▶▶ The Circle of Courage is a foundation model that helps us focus on what students need to succeed. When we focus on student needs and strengths, instead of deficits, they thrive.
- ▶▶ Students need to build skills in all 4 areas of the Circle and to have opportunities to use skills & experience all 4 areas of the Circle.
- ▶▶ As educators, we are charged with providing a climate that completes the circles of our students.

Slide #6: The Balanced Circle

Remember that each section of the Circle is important and provides balance for the others.

Slide #7: Circle of Courage Graphic Revisited

Allow participants to share additional thoughts and observations when this graphic is displayed.

Slide #8: Circle Opportunities

In a small group, brainstorm what you could do on a daily basis to provide opportunities for students in your assigned section of the Circle. Be as specific as possible. Record your responses on a piece of flip chart paper.

- ▶▶ Provide each group with a piece of flip chart paper and flip chart markers.
- ▶▶ Continue to encourage groups to be as specific as possible and provide details for each strategy.
- ▶▶ Once groups have brainstormed their lists of strategies, post and share as a large group. Discuss ways to move strategies into action.