

A HUMOR TOOL FOR LIBRARY COMMUNITY CONVERSATION CIRCLES



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**Welcome to
Our Community Conversation Circle**

What We Can Talk About

- If we choose to, we can begin each meeting with a Wellbeing Check-In, giving ourselves a chance to understand where we are for a minute or two.
- *Each person can share their feelings, needs, concerns, issues, or preferences.*
- From that awareness, *we may return to any issues brought up to be understood more.*
- Through asking questions and seeking clarification, or offering *advice, information, suggestions, community resources, contacts, and referrals*, we can be helpful to each other
- Timely topics may include relationships, family, community, habit improvement, goals, bucket lists, social security, or healthcare.
- Examples of eternal topics could be compassion, friendship, leadership, or luck.
- We can learn from each other, make the most out of our lives, and enjoy the pleasure of each other's company.
- We can end our meeting on a positive note by sharing some jokes or upcoming events.
- Our Community Conversation Circle can grow by each of us inviting people to join us next time.

Personal Wellbeing Check-In

To hear from everyone, go around the circle for 30 seconds to 3 minutes each. You can pass when it is your turn to share.

- What is going on for you?
- *Something new or good.*
- Something you are working on that you enjoy.
- *Something you are planning.*
- Something you would like to do or experience.
- A place you would like to visit.
- *A goal you would like to set.*
- Anything else you want to share.
- *What's been giving you energy — or taking it away — these days?*
- If you could share one thing you've been carrying quietly, what would it be?
- *What's something you've been wondering about life lately?*
- What has been beautiful, difficult, or surprising for you lately?



Rules, Formulas, and Tricks of Humor in Action



The Core Rules of Humor

❖ THE RULE OF THREE

- **The Concept:** Establish a pattern with two normal items, then break it with a ridiculous third item.
- *Circle Example:* "To have a great conversation circle, we only need three things: an open mind, mutual respect, and a neighbor who promises not to talk about their plumbing issues for an hour."

❖ BENIGN VIOLATION

- **The Concept:** Create a "violation" of a social norm or rule that is simultaneously harmless or distant.
- *Circle Example:* "We are technically breaking the most sacred law of the library today: we are looking each other in the eye and speaking at a completely normal human volume."

❖ TRAGEDY PLUS TIME

- **The Concept:** Transform a negative, stressful, or painful experience into comedy once enough time has passed to remove the emotional sting.
- *Circle Example:* "Remember when the library AC broke during our July meeting and we all sat here sweating like we were in a low-budget community theater sauna? We survived, and today we have climate control."

❖ THE K RULE

- **The Concept:** Use words containing hard "K" sounds (like *cupcake*, *pickle*, or *duck*), which naturally sound funnier.
- *Circle Example:* "If our conversation gets a bit tense today, don't panic. I brought a box of chocolate-covered crumpets to help us cope."



Structural Formulas

❖ SETUP AND PUNCHLINE

- **The Concept:** Guide the audience down a logical path, then suddenly pivot to an unexpected alternative meaning.
- *Circle Example:* "Our library circle is a wonderful place where neighbors gather to solve massive local issues. And to find out exactly who keeps stealing the local newspaper."

❖ THE CALLBACK

- **The Concept:** Reference a joke or concept introduced much earlier in the session, creating an instant "inside joke."
- *Circle Example:* (Early in the meeting:) "I forgot my reading glasses today." -> (Later in the meeting:) "We need a volunteer to read the city proposal. Let's pick someone with sharp vision, which automatically rules me out."

❖ INCONGRUITY RESOLUTION

- **The Concept:** Present a situation where two completely incompatible ideas or behaviors are forced together.
- *Circle Example:* "A group of adults sitting in tiny, brightly colored plastic chairs in the children's section, intensely debating the town's complex multi-million-dollar zoning laws."

❖ CLICHÉ TWIST

- **The Concept:** Take a universally recognized proverb or idiom and substitute the ending with a surprising twist.
- *Circle Example:* "Good things come to those who wait... except in a library circle, where if you wait too long to speak, your neighbor will take your turn and talk about their garden."



Practical Comedy Tricks

❖ THE "STRAIGHT MAN" FOIL

- **The Concept:** Pair a wildly enthusiastic or absurd idea with a completely serious, grounded observer to amplify the contrast.
- *Circle Example:* "One neighbor passionately explaining a grand plan to build a neighborhood UFO landing pad, while the secretary calmly writes down: 'Item 4: Discuss aerospace logistics.'"

❖ SPECIFICITY IS FUNNY

- **The Concept:** Replace generic words with hyper-specific details to paint a vivid, funny picture.
- *Circle Example:* "We aren't just here to talk about local traffic. We are here to talk about the 45-minute bottleneck at the intersection of Maple and Main caused by a single, stubborn wild turkey."

❖ SELF-DEPRECATING DEFLECTION

- **The Concept:** Criticize your own flaws first to instantly lower the audience's guard and build trust.
- *Circle Example:* "You can trust me to facilitate this circle fairly today. After all, I am a man who spent ten minutes this morning trying to unlock my front door with my library card."

❖ THE UNDERSTATEMENT

- **The Concept:** React to a massive, complex situation with absolute, casual calmness.
- *Circle Example:* "Our town budget is currently fifty million dollars in the red. So, it looks like we have a tiny, minor bookkeeping error to clear up before lunch."

12 Principles of Humor & The Community Circle

 Presented by Sandy Hinden with AI Humor 

1. Humor is an attitude of fun

- **The Principle:** You do not have to tell formal jokes to use humor; simply approaching a situation with a lighthearted mindset opens people up to the joy of the moment.
- **Circle Example:** *"Welcome everyone! We chose the library for our conversation circle today because we wanted to be surrounded by thousands of brilliant authors — just in case our own conversation runs completely dry after ten minutes."*

2. Humor attracts like

- **The Principle:** Positive humor builds immediate rapport and strengthens relationships. Joy is infectious; when you project warmth, people naturally mirror it.
- **Circle Example:** *"I love seeing so many neighbors pull their chairs into a tight circle. It proves that we either deeply crave community connection, or we are all trying to hide from the librarian who told us to stop talking out loud."*

3. Humor oils the innovative engine

- **The Principle:** Comedy allows the brain to make unusual associations between completely different ideas, paving the way for creative problem-solving.
- **Circle Example:** *"Today we are brainstorming how to improve neighborhood safety. Let's think outside the box — and if anyone suggests weaponizing the aggressive geese down at the local library pond, I am entirely open to hearing your strategy."*

4. Funny makes money (and meaning)

- **The Principle:** Laughing lowers our psychological defenses. When people laugh together, they drop their guards, making them far more willing to listen, learn, and cooperate.
- **Circle Example:** *"We are here to tackle some incredibly serious local budget issues. But I promise that if we can all laugh together first, the final numbers will look slightly less terrifying — or at least we'll be too happy to argue about them."*

5. Humor requires absolute authenticity

- **The Principle:** You cannot force a comedic style that isn't yours. True humor comes from leaning into your own unique perspective, quirks, and honesty.
- **Circle Example:** *"As your facilitator, I am supposed to be an expert in group dynamics. But honestly, my primary qualification today is that I am a local retiree who has spent twenty years practicing how to talk to strangers in the grocery checkout line."*

6. Economy of words is vital

- **The Principle:** A great piece of humor is concise. Listen closely to what you are saying, cut the fluff, and get straight to the point to keep your audience engaged.
- **Circle Example:** *"We have a lot of big talkers here today. So let's agree to keep our introductions brief: name, neighborhood, and the one household chore you are actively neglecting right now to sit in this room."*

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7. Positive humor puts people at ease

- **The Principle:** Use humor that lifts people up rather than breaking them down. Avoid mean-spirited sarcasm or targeting individuals, as they shut down open communication.
- **Circle Example:** *"Look around this circle. We have different ages, different backgrounds, and different politics. But we all share the same exact superpower: surviving the parking lot of this library on a Saturday morning."*

8. Humor aids in memory retention

- **The Principle:** People might forget the exact data points you share, but they will always remember how you made them feel. Laughter anchors concepts in the brain.
- **Circle Example:** *"If I tell you our town infrastructure needs help, you might forget by tomorrow. But if I remind you that Main Street has a pothole so deep it currently has its own library branch inside it, you'll remember to vote on Tuesday."*

9. Humor is a tool for service

- **The Principle:** Humor is a gift of hospitality. It serves the room by relieving collective tension, reducing stress, and making participants feel safe in an unfamiliar environment.
- **Circle Example:** *"If you feel nervous about speaking up in this circle today, don't worry. If you accidentally say something completely embarrassing, I will immediately tell an even worse story about myself to make you look like a genius."*

10. Humor is an indicator of healthy culture

- **The Principle:** The presence of shared, respectful laughter is proof that a group has established psychological safety and mutual respect.
- **Circle Example:** *"The fact that we can sit in this library circle and chuckle about our local quirks proves our community is healthy. If we were sitting here in dead, stony silence, I'd assume we were all undercover tax auditors."*

11. Misdirection and surprise drive engagement

- **The Principle:** Humor thrives when you guide the audience's expectations down one familiar path, then suddenly twist the ending to subvert their expectations.
- **Circle Example:** *"Community circles are designed to help us uncover deep, unspoken truths about our neighborhood, build lifelong bridges of empathy... and find out exactly which neighbor has been letting their dog dig up my prize-winning hydrangeas."*

12. Exaggeration highlights the truth

- **The Principle:** Taking a minor, relatable reality and blowing it up to an absurd degree shines a comedic spotlight on shared human experiences.
- **Circle Example:** *"We need to talk about local traffic. Yesterday, it took me so long to drive past the local high school that by the time I moved three feet, my car required an oil change, my hair had turned gray, and I had been elected mayor of a small town in New Jersey."*

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