



This month's circle tale was written by Thomas Grønberg, a coach and facilitator of human development processes in Denmark. Thank you, Thomas.

Circle Tale #40, April/May 2003 The Birth of a Circle for Life

In the late summer of 2002 I went to a Circle Practicum, led by Christina and Ann in wonderful Devon in the southern part of England. It turned out to be a very deep and intense practicum and one of the questions we worked with was "How will I bring the circle into my and other's lives"? At the practicum I had several ideas for different circles. But coming home, months went by without anything really happening.

Then during Christmas time I experienced a deeper contact with myself and life, and out of this contact grew the vision about initiating a "circle for life". The essence of the idea was to strengthen and support our respective life processes and be mutually inspired by each other through dialogues that dance between personal questions and more general life philosophical and spiritual questions and experiences.

The first thing I did was to write something about the idea and intention of the circle. Then I sent it out in my close network and one by one people joined in.

So, in January this year we were 4 friends starting out: two of both sexes. Now 5 circles older - using about four hours every time - we are the same 4 persons. Although we have sometimes talked about inviting more people into the circle, we don't really feel a need to be more than 4 persons. It seems to be a good number for dynamic and in-depth explorations into our lives and experiences, feelings, thoughts, struggles, joys and being.

It is by the way no longer "my" circle - it's our circle - because already in the very beginning of the circle's life, the holding and process of it pretty much slipped out of my hands. As host at the first meeting, I introduced the philosophy of the circle and the PeerSpirit principles and agreements. The other 3 liked the outlines, but after some talking we also added another principle to make the circle more dynamic: "We change the form of interaction when appropriate." Due to the introduction of this principle and our rotation of the leadership from day one, what we experience in the circle for life is not always "classical circling".

The spirit of it seems to be a playful ghost from Open Space Technology, saying: Be prepared to be surprised!

Truly, it's also not a very ritually oriented circle. Or maybe more correctly: transformation and flux seems to be the ritual. What happens is that each host of the circle does it their own way. To me this is a rather radical interpretation of the principle we added! In practice this means that we do not have a guardian, sometimes no centre, rarely a talking piece, sometimes no prepared questions, etc. We show up to the circles not knowing much about what is going to happen. The only fixed structure seems to be check-in and out...

So, how is life in the circle? Very colourful, playful and deep. For example, one of the questions we have explored: "What role does truth have in my life"? The dance between personal and more general questions is a success, but the tendency is to always come down to the personal. At times our conversations develop into pure coaching sessions, where we try to help each other cope with our different life situations or professional challenges.

When questions are not prepared in advance, what happens naturally, is that questions relevant to all of us - as by "magic"- seem to crystallize out of our stories in the check-in. It's as if a common thread is



woven, when we tell the stories from our respective lives. We have also tried a situation where the host has made a number of questions and then we pick one after another by throwing dice.

Some fruitful features that we have introduced to the circle are the use of music, dance and meditation. Our experiences are roughly...

- The right music facilitates relaxation, reflection and opening of the heart.
- Dance activates the feelings and body energy, and it helps us become present in a more physical way. One time we danced Gabrielle Roth's 5 rhythms before talking. This was a very dynamic and deepening experience that fueled and coloured the following dialogue very much.
- Meditation creates silence, centering and a deeper being. One time we did a shamanistic meditation, connecting us with the earth, our bodies and the universe etc.

I am sure that creativity, drawing or painting sooner or later will occur in this circle (I have used it in other circles with great benefits).

And yes. Sometimes shadow enters the circle.

So we have faced minor conflicts, where projection and misinterpretation were involved. But it didn't turn out to be a destructive thing. On the contrary, it has provided a lot of learning in the situations, because things are sorted out with consciousness, curiosity and mutual respect. One of these conflicts actually inspired one of us to make questions and reflections on constructive ways of coping with conflicts, the next time we met in the circle. This led to new insights, ideas and practical tools for conflict resolution.

The circle has developed quite differently from what I had imagined - both concerning form and some of the content. So, for me, it has been a true practice of letting go of the inner control freak and also a lesson in trusting the natural, intelligent and creative unfolding of things - because this is really what has occurred.

Some of the treasures of our circle for life:

- It's very satisfying to see and hear from the others, how the circle does them good.
- The intimacy of the circle-space and the things we share are very rich and valuable.
- To follow and take part of the plasticity and creative unfolding of the circle is a satisfaction in itself. And it's also a pleasure to witness how the others are just jumping into the thing and giving it its unique life.

Now one may ask, what does it take for a circle to develop like this? First of all, the people involved always shape the circle in their own picture, so to speak. Unique people create unique circles. And we are all unique human beings. Secondly, I think that it is very important how the initiation and process of the circle is approached. Sometimes I wonder what the circle would have been like, if I did not let it slip out of my hands very early in the process? I doubt that it would had flourished the way it is doing now...

Also, it is worth noticing the profound impact the creation of principles has on the formation and process of a circle. I think that the little extra principle we added to the PeerSpirit principles, did a lot of the trick in our case. Somehow it was like throwing a bomb of creativity!

I believe that some of the specific factors that have been very important for the life, evolution and success of this particular circle are:

- because we all knew each other beforehand and had no hangs on each other, we all had openness and mutual trust from day one.
- we were and are all courageously entering "the open space".
- we all take leadership (both as a host and personal leadership) and use our creativity.



- collectively we have a high degree of awareness of the situation and individually we have the empathy and skills needed to adjust the process and take care of each other.
- we are all pretty good at asking for what we need and respecting our own integrity. We also show each other respect and when appropriate, make "contracts" as we go on (to make a contract can be saying: "Is it okay that I will try to challenge you now on this or that"?).

Finally, I will point to the - in my opinion - most important factor for the life of a circle. It is a factor that one way or the other, has to be involved: Love. In our case it is love for each other, love for the truth, love for the process, love for exploration and inquiry of life, and love for all the stuff that life is made of.

Personally I am looking forward to experiencing the places the circle for life will take us in the future.

Blessings,
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If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

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