



This month's Circle Tale comes to us from the December 2008 *Life Planning Network Newsletter*. A friend and colleague, Betsy Cole, sent us a copy. The author Barbara Abramowitz, who lives and works in Newton, MA, is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, a Certified Body-Mind Life Coaching™ Specialist and authorized facilitator of Now What, 90 Days to New Life Direction. She shares with us the story of the Spirit Circle of 6 women members that she and Dr. Liz Roebuck founded 13 years ago.

Circle Tale, January 2009

Calling the Spirit Circle – Creating a Spiritual Community

For over 13 years we've been meeting once a month; inviting spirit into our lives, addressing the larger questions of existence, deepening relationship with the divine, ourselves and each other, and making the journey through life with mutual support.

It began as a conversation over lunch with a trusted friend and colleague. We were talking about our felt disconnection from existing religious institutions and a desire for a deeper spiritual life. I recalled that whenever I felt I needed something in my life, I would find a way to create it. What would it look like if we created our own spiritual community? Out of this conversation our "spirit group" was born.

Once a month on a Sunday night we meet at one of our homes. We have a ritualized opening or calling of the circle that has evolved over our years together and is an eclectic mix of welcoming customs including joining of hands as the host welcomes the group and invites spirit to be with us, the American Indian practice of burning sage to create a sacred space, and the ringing of Tibetan chimes to signal the beginning of meditation. After calling our circle we begin a focused or free form meditation for 20 to 30 minutes and then proceed to the discussion of the topic. After a closing ritual, we share a meal.

Our spirit circle is based on the concept of PeerSpirit Circling as described by author Christina Baldwin in her book *Calling the Circle*. "The circle is an ancient form of gathering. People gather into circles to call on Spirit, to celebrate, to hold council, to create community, to govern by consensus and to make cooperative decisions." Christina points out that "what is missing for most of us in the modern world is an understanding of how to live as an act of worship."

Our group adheres to the basic structure of PeerSpirit circling by practicing rotating leadership, shared responsibility, and reliance on Spirit. Our self-chosen topics have included principles of Buddhism, thoughts about death, teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh, Eckhart Tolle and other spiritual leaders, quantum physics and prayer, the concept of equanimity, the laws of attraction, and meditation techniques. We've experimented with art, music, and poetry as ways to access spirit.

As current and former psychotherapists, we are careful to not slip into a "therapy" model. We have been successful in holding our spiritual lens while sharing our lives' challenges and celebrations. We've generated an extraordinary support community, and look forward to our sacred time together to breathe, meditate, explore our beliefs, participate in fellowship, and to create meaning.

What would it look like if you created your own spiritual community?

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

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*