



This Circle Tale comes to us from Sue Edstrom, a consultant with Creative Health Care Management (CHCM). CHCM's goal is to transform health care through the implementation of Relationship-Based Care to strengthen leadership, improve patient care, design effective systems and build winning teams. Sue shares the following story with us from one of their 3-day Reigniting the Spirit of Caring workshops

## **Circle Tale, May 2007 Reigniting the Spirit of Caring**

The purpose of Reigniting the Spirit of Caring is to inspire participants to reconnect with why they went into health care and to renew and reclaim the joy and purpose in their work and in their personal lives. Participants include nurses, nursing assistants, unit secretaries, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, x-ray technicians, hospital chaplains, social workers, pharmacists and technicians. A variety of experiential learning methods are used including self-reflection, journaling, story telling, small group work and circle.

In creating circle space, we place a decorative cloth in the center, which holds a single candle surrounded by a small number of talking pieces. I also include items that represent things we have talked about each day, for example paper circles from an exercise that explores the balance of body, mind and spirit. We explain the principles and practices of circle when we gather for the first time. A reading, meditation, or song related to the theme of each day is used to open and close every circle. We also pose a question for reflection and response.

A recent nurse participant made it clear by his body language and lack of involvement on the first day that he did not want to be attending this program. During the opening circle on day two, individuals are asked to bring a gift (a talent or object that tells something about them personally). This nurse shared a photograph of his family which included a child in a wheel chair. The nurse explained his frustration and physical exhaustion in going home to care for his paraplegic child each day after a hectic stressful day of work at the hospital. As the day progressed he was engaged in the discussion and exercises - which was a significant change in participation from the previous day.

In the opening circle of the third and last day, participants are asked to share their "anchor picture" which is the product of a guided imagery exercise that describes a time or place one feels at peace. The nurse had drawn a picture of a park with a large, bold date written on the bottom. He explained that his anchor picture represented a place where he and his family vacationed - and also the date was the last day his child had walked.

In the closing circle on the final day, the participants were asked what had been the most important impact of this experience for them and what change were they inspired to commit to as a result of the experience. This nurse explained that he had recently decided to leave the nursing profession, and had taken out an application for a position in a new field. Through this program he realized how important his work as a nurse is in the lives of others. He had decided nursing is where he belongs and needs to stay. He went on to say how much being in circle had meant to him – he said "I feel safe in circle. I have been able to share openly and honestly my feelings and frustrations, and I feel very supported by everyone. I really was skeptical about coming to this - now I don't want it to end. This experience came at the right time for me - I know I need to stay in nursing."

*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](http://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.*