

The thinking circle<sup>1</sup> is an effective method for group communication and decision-making, apparently a Quaker wisdom tradition. Highly structured and respectful, the thinking circle allows for

- individuals to go deeper in their thinking,
- emotions to be expressed and serve as an appropriate guide,
- all individuals to participate,
- and, sometimes, group consensus!

The thinking circle can be used in any group: client, professional, class, or family. It may be self-facilitated or facilitated by a non-participant. The essential methodology involves these rules:

1. Participants sit around a table or otherwise in a circle. The speaking opportunity passes in sequence from one person to the next around the circle.
2. If it's not your turn, you may not speak. For your turn, you may speak or pass.
3. If you pass on one round, you may still speak on later rounds.
4. For your turn, you can choose to do any one or more of the following:
  - a. state your own position, including how you may agree or disagree with what someone else said.
  - b. ask or answer questions, or
  - c. make and respond to requests.
5. Participants are invited to listen deeply to the other speakers. Sometimes the one lone voice is the most important.
6. Redundant messages and disrespect are generally discouraged.
7. Continue around the circle as many times as it takes until everyone has passed, or by limitation of time, rounds, consensus or leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to HARTLEY GOLDSTONE for introducing his version of the Thinking Circle through the Rendezvous Collaboration of the Purposeful Planning Institute.