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# How to Start a Circle

## Six Simple Steps

Circle Connections

<http://www.circleconnections.com>

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# Introduction

## Why Circles?

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*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

*-- Margaret Mead.*

Circles bring positive change locally and globally, within and without. It is the oldest form of social interaction.

For a long time hierarchal structures have replaced circular structures as the dominant leadership model for groups, as they were seen as the most efficient to a ‘power-over’ style of leadership. However in today’s world, Circles are being revitalized. Their benefits are being re-discovered as a more respectful model that provides and fosters full participation and shared leadership, encourages creativity, demonstrates cooperation instead of competition and dominance, implements power-with instead of power-over, and reveals new solutions to old problems.

When two or more are gathered together you are a circle. When you follow Circle Principles you become a conscious and sacred circle. Conscious and sacred circles are fun and give each participant the courage and power to be most fully who they are authentically, empowering them to make a positive difference in the world.

Starting a Circle is simple, and almost innate to who we are as women. Using this feminine structure for centuries women come together formally or informally using the Circle Process for conscious connection, deep conversation, mindful creation, conflict resolution, community action, and to realize their dreams.

<http://www.circleconnections.com> • email: [info@circleconnections.com](mailto:info@circleconnections.com)

A Circle can be called for social, personal, professional, entrepreneurial, community or global needs. Contact Circle Connections for assistance in learning and applying the Circle Process to your specific needs.

Contact **Rhonda Hull** ([rhonda@circleconnections.com](mailto:rhonda@circleconnections.com)) to learn specifically about calling a **WOMANfest** Circle of Encouragement and Support - merging the ancient and feminine Circle Process with with the popular MasterMind concept to determine and realize your dreams, personal and professional.

Contact **Ann Smith** ([ann@circleconnections.com](mailto:ann@circleconnections.com)) to learn more about **BEING GREEN** Circles and training to become more environmentally conscious and earth-friendly in the good company of other women.

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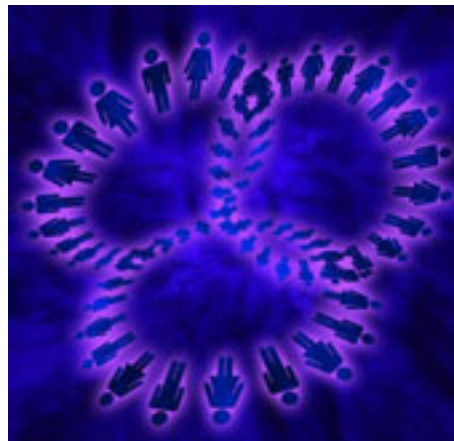
# The Basics

## How to Start a Circle?

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To start a Circle, find someone with a similar desire to help get it going. Unite your energy and have others join you so that collectively you have the skills, woman-power and courage to go forward. When two or more gather together you are a circle.

### 1. DREAM THE CIRCLE INTO REALITY.

- Believing that being in a circle will make a difference is the first step to starting a circle.
- Write down your dream to start a circle and post it somewhere you will see it often such as your bathroom mirror or at your computer.
- Share your dream with others and invite them to join you in starting a circle. Post a friendly announcement in local gathering places such as churches, synagogues, libraries, or internet cafés. The message could read simply: “Looking for women who are interested in starting a women’s action circle where together we can make a positive difference.”



*Some basics to remember when getting started are:*

- **Sit in circle.** Place chairs or other forms of comfortable seating in a circle, where each face is seen and everyone can be heard.
- **Devise your own rituals to open and close the circle.** A ritual can be as simple as each person introducing herself (or himself) and offering a short sentence of hopes for your circle. The closing ritual could be each person sharing how the circle experience was for them. Native American circles start with a ritual to honor their sacred space, Mother Earth. Lighting a candle, having several minutes of silence, reciting a prayer or poem, singing a song are just some of the ways. Using a “talking object” brings the conversation to a deeper level of sharing. Whoever holds the “talking object” speaks from the heart while the others listen from the heart. Develop your openings and closing, making it meaningful and fun.
- **Adopt Circle Principles.** Creating a circle, versus merely a ‘gathering of women,’ begins by having a shared vision and using Circle Principles. Visit <http://www.circleconnections.com> and <http://www.millionthcircle.org> to learn more about Circle Principles. Introduce Circle Principles, asking for feedback and creating other guidelines as needed as your circle evolves.

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*The following are universal and basic Circle Principles:*

- Create sacred space
- Speak one at a time
- Promote open and honest communication
- Listen actively without judgment
- Offer experience instead of advice
- Invite silence when in doubt or need
- Share leadership and resources
- Decisions by consensus
- Each one’s skills/gifts are a collective gift

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- **Name your Circle and its purpose.**
  - Some Circles unite only to deepen friendships. Others come together as an Action Circle with a common cause, uniting their creativity and energy promote positive change. Decide by consensus the name and purpose of your circle. Naming your circle brings it into reality not only for each member but to those outside the circle.

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*Added Ingredients for Action Circles:*

- After introductions talk about your dream and the collective dream you heard from the check-ins. When you organize around a dream the energy stays positive. Life is attracted to the light. When we move toward the enlightenment of solutions to problems in the world we keep the energy positive. When we focus around problems we have problems and the energy will be negative.
- You can use newsprint to brainstorm all that ideas for making a collective dream become a reality. This is a time for all ideas without judgment listed in a random style on a newsprint—shower of ideas. When sprinkled on newsprint it prevents a linear ranking of ideas where one is ranked more important than another. Allow the group to discern a natural cluster of ideas for forming next steps based on their own interests. Individuals chose steps they want to take based on passion plus accountability. See Open Space Technology [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org) for more complete information on self-organizing principles. Circle Connections staff will also help you in understanding the self-organizing principles of Open Space and Circle Principles.

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Make sure that all members are heard and are able to contribute fully. Every member becomes a leader and together they are all responsible for making the circle time meaningful for all. In a large group each sub-group is given time to meet to discuss how to carry out their plans such as those who want to work on communications/PR, those who want to make signs for a rally, those who want to involve other organizations, etc.

