

C

CHAPTER 7

Feelings of Belonging: Tuning into Others

This chapter specifically addresses one of the main aims of Circle Time – promoting class cohesion and a supportive group ethos. The activities here are aimed at encouraging people to know one another in different ways, to discover what individuals have in common, explore the different groups to which we all belong, break down stereotypes and weaken ‘cliques’ in the class. They are intended to foster a sense of connection. This includes defining trust and support and exploring how we might value diversity both for ourselves and for others.

Sentence Completions

- The best thing about my school is ...
- This class is great when ...
- The best day I had in this class was when ...
- I feel welcome in this class when ...
- I look forward to coming to school because ...
- Valuing someone means ...
- I feel valued when ...
- When someone smiles at me I feel ...
- The best thing anyone said to me in school was ...
- When someone says something positive to me I feel ...
- When someone asks me to join in I feel ...
- When I am having a hard time it helps when ...
- We all need help when ...

- For me respect means ...
- I feel supported when ...

Silent Statements

Stand up and change places if:

- you have ever asked someone to join a game you are playing
- you have ever offered help to someone who is stuck on a work problem
- you have been able to ask for help
- you have been willing to lend something of yours to a classmate
- you return borrowed things
- you have ever asked someone who is left out to join your game
- you have ever stuck up for someone who was being bullied
- you have been invited into a game
- you know people who jump to conclusions about someone based on their looks/'race'/religion/what they are wearing/ability or disability/family/voice/accent
- you have met people who are different from you, who treat you with respect.

Activities with a Partner

Pair Shares

Ask pairs to check with each other what they are happy to have fed back to the class group.

- Find two things you both like doing at school.
- Find two things that you both like doing at home.
- Find two things that you both like about this school.
- Find two things that you both like about this class.
- Find two things that you could say or do to make someone feel they belong here.
- Find two positive things that you have said at home about this class.
- Is there one thing you both would like to change about this class (no naming – issues only)?
- Interview each other about the things you might do on a Sunday.
- Interview each other about your favourite place and what is in it – this could be a room at home, somewhere at school or a holiday destination.

Whole Group Games

The first activities here are designed for people who either are getting to know one another or who have just started Circle Time.

Alphabet Groups

YMS

Put all the letters of the alphabet on the floor. Each person goes to the letter that their name begins with and introduces themselves to others in that group, saying one thing about themselves. The leader can choose a category or let students choose what they say. Then they go to the letter that is the first letter of their family name, street name, their mother's name, or their favourite colour.

Picture Me

MS

Each person has a piece of paper and something with which to draw. In pairs, each person interviews the other, finding out what their interests are. They draw these on the paper – the only writing is the person's name. After five minutes the pieces of paper are sent five places around the circle. The person with the paper then has to introduce the person and talk about their interests. The person has a brief right of reply to correct any inaccuracies.

Guess What

MS

(This shows how well we do know or do not know one another.)

Everyone passes one another in the room, they make eye contact and give a greeting every time they walk past someone. At a given signal they stay with the last person that they greeted. The teacher calls out a question and each person guesses the answer for the other. Examples of questions follow.

- Is this person an only child?
- Does this person like eating rhubarb?
- Does this person wear something around their neck?
- Is this person religious?

Was the guess right or wrong?

YMS

Odd Fact Out

(Can you tell which is truth and which is fiction?)

Each person writes four things about themselves on a piece of paper: three are true and one is made up. You can change this for younger children to one thing true and one not true: they say it, not write it down. Everyone goes into the middle of the Circle and shares the information with others in pairs. Who can guess which is the odd one out, what is true?

YMS

When the Warm Wind Blows

(This is a good energizer and shows that we have many things in common.)

One chair is moved from the Circle. The leader of the game says: 'The warm wind blows for everyone who ...' and chooses a category that many children share. Students change places (including the leader), leaving one person without a chair. They become the leader and choose the next category saying the same phrase. Categories that many share might be:

- likes chocolate
- has a brother
- is learning to swim
- is [x] years old.

YMS

Have You Ever ... ?

(To show what we share, celebrate difference and get to know one another.)

Give a statement to the group. If the statement applies to a person, they run to the middle and do a 'high five' with the others who share this experience. If someone is the only individual with this experience, the circle applauds. The following are examples.

Have you ever:

- ridden a horse
- surfed in the sea
- slept in a tent
- owned a dog
- played the drums

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- seen a snake
- sung karaoke
- broken your leg
- had a relative who lived to 100
- eaten snails.

People to People**YM**

(Making limited physical contact.)

Each pair stands up in the middle of the Circle facing each other. One chair is removed from the Circle. The leader calls out actions such as:

- hand to hand
- finger to thumb
- hand to head
- back to back
- nose to nose
- toe to toe
- right hand to left knee.

The pairs make the appropriate actions. When the leader calls out 'People to people', everyone rushes back to their seat, leaving one person without a chair. They become the next leader.

Footsie**YM**

(Group cooperation.)

Everyone sits on the floor with their legs stretched out in front of them towards the centre of the Circle. Two or three soft toys are placed on ankles and at a given signal the group attempts to move these around the Circle without touching them with their hands.

Extension Activity

- You could play rabbit and fox by trying to get one animal catch up with (or escape from) the other.

Mirror Wave**YM**

(A version of the Mexican wave that involves everyone in a physical activity – also great for concentration.)

Each person stands up and turns so that they are facing the back of the person in front. One person is designated the leader and makes a simple movement such as swing their arm to the side. The person behind waits one second and then copies, so that the movement goes all around the room. When it reaches the leader, the person behind starts a different movement which goes all around the room. You may want to ask some students to watch from inside the Circle from time to time to rate how well the group has done as a team.

Class Web**YMS**

(This uses a ball of string to demonstrate that we are all important and each is responsible for what happens in our class.)

Everyone stands up. The person holding the ball of string holds one end and throws the ball to someone else saying their name. This person holds onto the string, the connection is tightened and they throw the string ball to someone else. This continues until everyone is included and the web has been made. The facilitator comments on the importance of everyone in the group being part of the web that has been made. If time is an issue, do this in several small groups.

Extension Activities

- The Circle sits on the floor rather than stands. One person starts a story with one sentence. They then roll the ball of string to someone else who continues the story with another sentence.
- One person says: 'I like ... because ...', and rolls or throws the ball of string to that person who says: 'I like ... because ...' this continues until everyone is included. The facilitator might wish to be the last person.

Circle Knot**MS**

(This is an activity demonstrating that sometimes whole groups of people get themselves into knotty situations and that it is up to everyone to work out a solution.)

Everyone stands up, and joins right hands. Then they join left hands with a different person. They all then move anywhere they want so long, as they do not let go. After 20 seconds the group will be in a knot and now have to try and untangle themselves, again without letting go of one another's hands. If this works, the circle will reform with some people facing in and some facing out.

Hoop Game**MS**

The group holds hands around the Circle. The Circle is broken in one place and a large hoop is placed on the hands before they join up again. The aim is to get the whole hoop around the Circle without anyone letting go. You may want to split large Circles into smaller ones and turn this into a race.

Guess Who?**YMS**

(This is for when the class really knows and feels safe with one another.)

One person volunteers to be blindfolded. They then sit on a chair in the middle of the Circle. Another person then comes and sits on a chair opposite. The first person has to guess who their classmate is. They do this by touching the person's face and by asking questions of the Circle.

Find Your Match**YMS**

(Looking for similarities between people.)

Everyone stands up and walks around the room, greeting one another without words. Each person then finds someone:

- with the same colour eyes
- with the same hair length
- with the same size feet
- with a first name starting with the same letter
- with a last name starting with the same letter.

Variation

- Find all the people who share the named characteristic.

Thanks in a Hat**YMS**

(This activity focuses on respecting others by acknowledging them.)

This is in two parts. The first is a sentence completion in the round to raise awareness of possibilities: 'I could say thank you for ...' Suggest that people are specific: not just for 'helping me', but 'helping me with ...'; not just 'being a friend', but 'being a friend by ...' Each person puts their name on a piece of paper and puts it into a container. The container is shaken up and then everyone takes a name out. Each person reads out the name and says: 'I would like to thank ... for ...'

This Class Says Thank You

YMS

(Promoting acknowledgement and respect around the school.)

The Circle brainstorms all the people who do things for the class in any way. This could include the caretaker, administrative staff, cleaners and so on. Each small group takes one of these people, discusses what this person does, how they help the class and the difference that they make. The group then makes a card that expresses the thanks of the class. Also, they take responsibility for delivering it to that person.

Purple World

Y

(This builds on an activity for younger children suggested by the UK's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to address racism.)

The teacher tells a story about a world where everything is purple – clothes, food, cars, houses and schools. The only food is purple soup, which everyone eats at the same time. Students talk in pairs about what it would be like if everything was the same – would they like it or not? This activity is followed by sentence completions:

- if everything was the same ...
- being different is good because ...

The children then talk in pairs and find one thing that is the same about them and one thing that is different.

In or Out?

YMS

(This illustrates that we all belong to a variety of groups.)

Students are asked to come and sit in the middle of the Circle; they will enter or leave this group depending on whether the given category applies to them. Many different categories can be used – here are a few.

Those who:

- have moved house/town/country in the last year
- had a shower this morning
- have a brother/sister/new baby
- love to dance/play football/go fishing
- have blue/brown/green/grey eyes
- are wearing socks/jewellery/hair band/wristwatch

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- had toast/cornflakes/tea/coffee for breakfast
- like reading books/watching TV/playing football
- like maths/history/art/English
- walked to school/came by bus/came by car/rode a bike
- have seen the latest *Harry Potter* film
- pray/take exercise/watch the news every day.

Knee Race**YM**

(For groups who feel comfortable with this level of physical contact.)

This is an alternative way of playing the above game. All those who fit a category (like football, are wearing blue, have a cat) move one place to the right. If there is someone on that seat, they sit on their knee. If there is someone already on that person's knee, they must stay where they are. The game ends with the first person to get around the Circle and back to their own seat.

Sticky Popcorn**Y**

The children 'pop' about the room as individual pieces of popcorn. When they touch someone else (or are touched), they 'stick together'. Eventually all the group are stuck together like a big ball of popcorn.

Extension Discussions

- What does it mean when people 'stick together'?
- What is good about this, what might not be so good?
- Sentence completions:
 - Sticking up for someone means ...
 - I want my friends to stick up for me when ...

Here Be Monsters

YM

(This demonstrates how we can all help one another to overcome obstacles and get through difficulties to reach goals. Success depends on support from the whole class group.)

Two people volunteer to be the travelling adventurers. They will cross the land of monsters and dangers to reach the land of sweet dreams and treasure. They will be supported by a team of guides (the whole class), who will show them the way and keep them safe.

Each adventurer is blindfolded. There is an empty chair at each side of the Circle and several 'monsters' and dangers are placed across the Circle. Plastic dinosaurs, sharks, toy lions, etc. can be used as well as boxes for mountains and pieces of paper for lakes. The students might like to make their own 'monsters' and other obstacles for this game. On each chair is placed a bag of treasure. This could be stickers, gold chocolate coins or other small items. There must be enough for everyone. The aim is for both adventurers to negotiate the dangers and collect the treasure from the other side of the room and for the class team to help them succeed. The aim is to get them to the treasure at about the same time. It is not a race.

The whole group helps in the negotiation of monsters and dangers by giving instructions of where to move, how far to move and when to stop. It is the responsibility of the class to ensure that the person is safe. There are several ways to do this. Either each person takes it in turns to give an instruction about how far to move and in which direction, or the class can shout out when the adventurer is in danger and tell them which way to go. Also, you may use signs, perhaps a whistle for stop and clapping for going forward. You may like to start the game by asking the class, together or in small groups, what the best strategy would be. The 'treasure' is shared with the class in a gesture of solidarity and thanks.

You could give each adventurer seven lives, which means that they lose a life each time they come into contact with a monster. Alternatively, you could give other members of the team spells or special powers to use when the monsters get too close, such as a disappearing spell, a charm offensive or a cuddly spell. The creative options are endless.

Escape!

YM

Extension Discussions

- What sorts of difficulties or monsters might someone in this class face?
- How might people in the class support someone who is having a challenging time?

(Fun, contact and support.)

A small group of five to eight students volunteers to be quackers. These are rare birds who stand bent over with their hands behind their knees. They only walk backwards and cannot see in daylight. The others form a 'pen' by holding hands in a Circle. There is one place where the Circle is broken, which is the escape route for the quackers. The quackers start off by huddling in the middle of the Circle with their heads towards the centre. With their eyes shut they move backwards trying to find the exit, quacking from time to time. The rest of the group gently keep them penned in until they find their escape. When one has escaped the pen they can stand up but keep quacking to help the others out. Escapes can be timed to introduce an element of competition as well as cooperation.

Who Is Missing?**YM**

(This game increases awareness of individuals in the group.)

One person is blindfolded in the centre of the room. All the other children change places and one child leaves the room. The person in the centre takes off the blindfold and tries to work out who is missing. If they cannot say straightaway who it is, they can ask questions of the group which have a yes or no answer: 'Is it a girl?', 'Does she have brown hair?' Once identified, the person outside then becomes the blindfolded one in the centre.

Rescue!**M**

(Students have to work together to get everyone to safety. This activity is worth doing several times consecutively to improve outcomes.)

Three students are in the original rescue team. Everyone else is unconscious in the burning building (lying motionless in the middle of the Circle). No one can help to rescue anyone else until they have been rescued themselves and taken to a safe place outside (a point outside the circle). Once they have been rescued, they join the rescue team. The building will blow up in four minutes. Can all the class get to safety before it does? Aim for class bests and talk about what worked well and how to do it better next time. You may want to talk about fire safety as a conclusion to this activity.

Walking a Mile in Someone's Shoes

This is a phrase that suggests that once you know what life is like for someone, you will have more empathy with them. These activities help students to understand how things might be for others by imagining and/or experiencing some of their situations and challenges.

Shoes**MS**

(This activity encourages imagination.)

Have a collection of different interesting shoes. These can be for men, women, children, in good condition or scruffy. Each group of three or four students is given one of the shoes and is asked to write a profile together on the person that may have worn that shoe. This includes physical attributes such as age and gender, likes and dislikes, what they might have done for a living or for a hobby, what made them really happy or sad and the best thing to happen to them when they wore the shoe. Each group then presents their character to the Circle.

Variation

You could do the same activity using hats.

Extension Discussions

- How much can you tell about someone from what they are wearing or look like?
- Is there always a 'story' for each person that you don't know about?
- Could their 'story' affect how they feel about things?

Extension Activities

- Put each character in a setting and discuss or act out how they may react to given situations: knowing their background, how they may feel and react. For example: they are in a car accident, they are bullied at work or school, they have a disagreement with their best friend.
- Give each group a card with a single additional piece of information about their 'character' such as 'this person is deaf' or 'this person has just won the lottery! How does this single piece of information change how you see someone?

Give Us a Clue

MS

(This activity is intended to develop empathy with those who cannot read well or have a struggle with understanding language.)

Ask everyone in the Circle to try and work this out. They do it by themselves for the first two minutes then in a pair for five more minutes then in groups of four for a couple more minutes.

- **Ι λικε γοινγ φισηινγ. Ι γο ωιτη μψ στεπ-δαδ ανδ βροτηερ σομετιμεσ. Ωε σιτ ανδ ηαπε ουρ λυνχη ουτ οφ α πλαστιχ βοξ ανδ δρινκ γινγερ βεερ. Ι αμ ρεαλλψ γοοδ ατ φισηινγ. Ι λικε ιτ μορε τηαν ρεαδινγ ανδ ωριτινγ.**

They also should be given these clues:

Ι = I

λικε = like

φισηινγ. = fishing

δαδ = dad

βροτηερ = brother

γοοδ = good

ανδ = and

ισ = is

When the time is up, show the answer.

- **I like going fishing. I go with my stepdad and brother sometimes. We sit and have our lunch out of a plastic box and drink ginger beer. I am really good at fishing. I like it more than reading and writing.**

Students can then brainstorm:

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- what did they feel when they were working this out?
- what helped them feel better?

Point out that for some individuals, tasks are hard like this all the time.

Extension discussions

- What other situations are there where it is a real struggle to understand communication?
- Has anyone in the Circle got a story that illustrates this?

The next two activities give students a taste of what it is like to be visually impaired.

The Jelly Wobble Game

YM

(A messy game perhaps for the end of term.)

One-third of the group at a time (an even number) takes part in this game. Each needs to volunteer to be blindfolded. Pairs sit opposite each other in the middle of the Circle and are covered with protective clothing (oversize old shirts put on backwards work well and long strips of plastic to cover legs and feet). Each person is given a bowl of jelly and a spoon. The aim of the game is each person to feed their partner the jelly until the bowl is empty. The first pair to do so wins. If noise isn't a problem, the rest of the Circle can call out helpful directions.

In the Dark

YMS

(This game also develops trust.)

Students are in groups of three. In the Circle a number of obstacles are placed. Two students lead the blindfolded student slowly around the Circle, not tripping over anything or bumping into other groups. Each student in the trio has a turn of being blindfolded and takes a turn around the Circle. You may want to do this with a section of the Circle at a time if space is very limited.

In your groups, discuss the following.

- What did it feel like not to be able to see where you were going?
- How did you feel about the two people who were guiding you?
- What helps to trust somebody?
- What can you imagine are the difficulties for someone who can't see properly?
- What sort of things might they need to live as near normal a life as possible?
- Can you always tell if someone can't see properly?

Hearing Impairment: Seeing Is Hearing**MS**

Partners cover their mouths with a scarf and engage in a conversation about something that has happened at school in the last couple of days. How easy is it to hear someone when their face cannot be seen properly? Then each person places a piece of blutac about the size of a marble in both ears. How easy is it now to make out what someone is saying? Then teacher plays some loud music (or even better, a tape of playground noise) Does this make a difference to their ability to understand?

Discussion

- What does this tell you about what people with a hearing impairment need?

Physical Difficulties: the Drawing Challenge**YMS**

This is a paired activity. Each person has a piece of blank paper and a pencil. They draw a picture of their partner with their name below it but they draw with their non-dominant hand.

Variation

- Draw or paint a picture holding the pencil or brush in your toes or mouth.

Relay Race**YM**

Students are placed in groups of equal numbers. Each person has to keep one arm by their side and not use it, or put it in a sling. The students are in a line. Some way in front of them are chairs on which are placed a shirt with buttons, a hat and a pair of boots. At the signal the first person in each team runs to put on the clothes, runs back around the line back to the chair, takes off the clothes and runs back to touch the second person in their team. The first team to finish the relay wins.

Discussions

- What was different from the way you usually do things? What did you have to think about? What feelings did you experience?
- Do you know anyone who has a physical disability? What adaptations do they have to make in their lives?
- Imagine not having the use of your legs and being in a wheelchair. Check out how many slopes and steps are there from your house to school or in your local shopping centre.

Visiting Strange Lands

(To appreciate the difficulties that newcomers might have.)

Divide the circle into two groups. One group is the Maxis and the other the Minis. The Maxis:

- greet each other by putting out their tongue and wagging their hand behind their head
- are very interested in all watersports and often want to talk about this
- think that people with brown eyes are the most important
- avoid touching one another in public in any way
- have a great sense of humour.

The Minis:

- greet each other by grabbing the other person's arm with both hands and looking deep into their eyes
- are very interested in all ball games and often want to talk about this
- think that people who are short or wear glasses are especially wise
- avoid laughing in public
- breathe very deeply when they are upset about anything.

Each group is told only about their ways of being. The separate groups then spend five minutes with their own 'people'. Then they start to 'visit' each other in small groups. This cultural exchange is to foster good international relations. Everyone needs to visit the other group until everyone has been.

Discussions

- Did you feel some affinity with your original group?
- Did you feel confused when you went for a visit?
- How did you learn what to do?
- Did you mind trying to be different from your first group so you could 'fit in'?
- List what you have learned from this activity.

Extension Discussions

- What experiences have some people had before they arrive in a new country?
- What difference will this make to how they feel about being there?
- What do you think people miss about their old country?
- What might help them to settle in?

Small Group Activities

Our Class Shield

YM

(Deciding how to represent this class.)

Small groups are given a large piece of paper in the shape of a flag or shield and some coloured pens. The groups talk about what they would put on such a shield to represent their class. They then draw and/or write what they have agreed. Each group shares their shield with the Circle.

This Class Cares

YMS

(Small group discussions to raise awareness of actions that might be taken to promote an inclusive atmosphere in the class.)

- What can we do to welcome someone new to this class?
- What can we do to help someone new to fit into this class?
- What would we want a new person to think about this class?
- What can we do to welcome someone back when they have been away for a long time?
- What can we do to learn about one another and one another's families?
- What might help someone who is always left out?
- What might help someone who struggles to understand what to do?

Absent But Not Forgotten

YMS

(To support students away from school.)

Sometimes an individual is absent from the class for a length of time because of illness, bereavement or even suspension. Showing that person that they are still part of the class not only makes them feel supported but also promotes an ethos that everyone matters here. Groups are given card, stickers, and felt pens. They discuss what is going to go on the card for the student to show them that their classmates are thinking of them. What words will go on it, and who will write them, What illustrations will there be? The teacher takes responsibility for sending the cards to the student concerned.