

# Circles of Support Workbook



# Circle of Support

A Circle of Support is a group of people that you meet with regularly and can trust.

They will support you with your goals and choices now and in the future.



## A Circle of Support can:

- Help you meet new people and make friends
- Support you to make decisions
- Support you to make changes you want in your life
- Support you to advocate for yourself



**Diversity and Disability Alliance** is a community based, peer-led organisation. It is led by and for people with disability from diverse backgrounds (peers) with the support of families and allies.

# Our Team



**Julie**



**George**



**Phuong**



**Abraham**



**Tammy**



**Maina**

We are a team of facilitators with lived experience of disability. We are here to support you with the decisions you make, alongside the people in your life who care about you.

We will support you to start a Circle of Support for yourself, or for someone you know.

# What can a Circle of Support do for you?

If you would like more information, we can meet with you. You can bring someone to support you.

The meeting can be online or in person.



We can talk with you about Circles of Support and answer all of your questions



For more information, visit:

[www.ddalliance.org.au/circles-widen.html](http://www.ddalliance.org.au/circles-widen.html)

# If you decide to have a Circle of Support

We will meet with you and your Circle regularly.



We will talk about what is important to you, what you like and don't like about your life. We will talk about changes you would like to make.

In between meetings, everyone will have something to do before we meet again

We will only share information about you with the people you choose.



This workbook is for you to write or draw your ideas.  
We will support you to achieve the life you want to live.

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# About Me

Our first meeting will be about getting to know you.

Use these pages to write or draw some ideas.



If you have already started doing this, please bring your ideas to our meeting.





# My Life Now

## My interests and hobbies...



I enjoy...



## My skills and strengths...



## Where I live...



## Who I live with...



# Purpose – What my Circle will do for me

You are at the centre of your Circle of Support. Think about some of the things your Circle might support you to do. Here are a few examples:



**Learning**



**Independent Living**



**Getting Fit**



**Relationships**



**Getting a Job**



**Volunteering**



**Social Life**



**Spirituality**

A circle is about supporting you to live the life you want.

# My vision for a good life

New things I'd like to try

Changes I'd like to make in my life...

## My hopes and dreams for the future

## **Purpose - A summary**

**My Priorities - Some of the things I want to do in the next 1-2 years**

**In the future, my Circle of Support might assist me to...**



# About your Circle of Support

A Circle of Support is made up of people that you know well or want to know better.

Firstly, we will talk about ALL the people you know.



Then we will think about a few people you might like to invite to join your Circle.

You may choose to invite a



**Family  
Member**



**Workmate**



**School  
Friend**



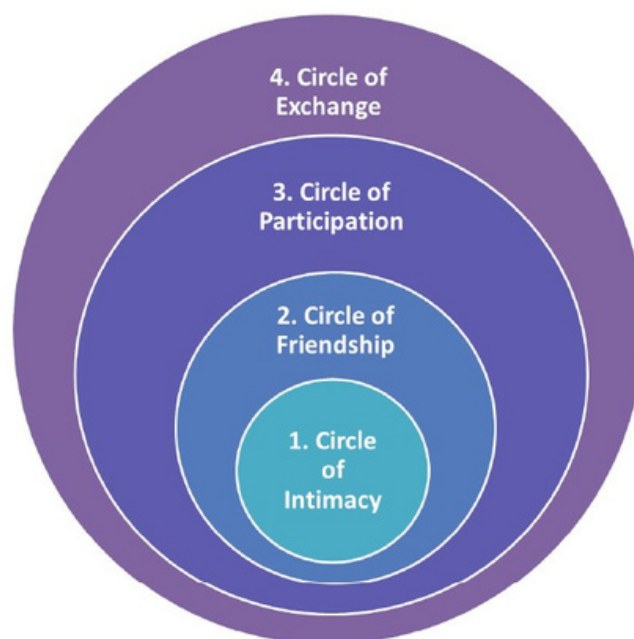
**Club  
Member**

Finally, we will think about the best way to invite people to be part of your Circle.

# The people in my life

## Circles of relationships

Judith Snow (1998) describes 4 different circles of relationships that exist within our lives.



The **Circle of Intimacy** includes the people who are closest to us. Such as family members or close friends.

The **Circle of Friendship** are the people who are friends or relatives that we like to see socially.

The **Circle of Participation** includes the people, organisations or groups we spend time with. This could be at work, school, clubs or sporting teams.

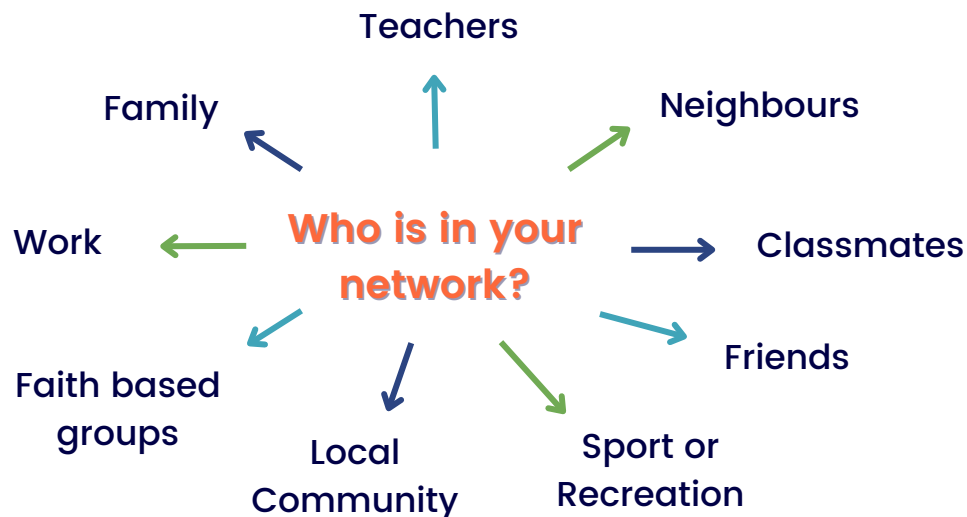
The **Circle of Exchange** is made up of people who are in our lives because they are paid to be there. For example, doctors, teachers, social workers, therapists, hairdressers, car mechanics and tradespeople.

**Make a list of ALL the people you know.**

You may be surprised at how many people there are in your life already.

They could include family members, friends, people you see in your community, or your support staff (if you employ support workers).

# Who should I ask to join my Circle?



Think about who might be a good person to ask.

Someone you like who knows you well.

Or someone you trust and would like to know better.



It is good to have people of different ages in your Circle, including your peers.

Anyone you know who you trust and shows a genuine interest in you and your wellbeing could be involved.



It is your decision to choose who is in your Circle.

## Should paid support staff be included in your Circle?

Circle members are all volunteers.

Paid support workers can come to your Circle meetings. Their role is to support you during and between meetings.



**Support**

Former staff, who you have a good connection with, may volunteer as a friend and join your Circle.

## How many people should be in my Circle?



A Circle might have three or four members to start with. Circles of Support can build up over time.

# How do I invite people to join my Circle?

You can invite them by:



**Email**



**Letter**



**In Person**



**Phone**

You can decide which way will work best for you.

Being invited to be a Circle member can be a great thing. You may be surprised at how interested people are to be involved.

Don't be offended if people can't be in your Circle. There are many reasons why a person is not able to join.

We can support you to invite people to be in your Circle.



When inviting someone, let them know the purpose of your Circle and why you want them to be involved.

It may help to write down answers to these questions:



## What is a Circle of Support?

A group of people that meet together to support me with my goals.



## How often will we meet?

It is important to have regular meetings. Meeting once every four to six weeks will keep your Circle strong.

## How long will the meeting be?

Circle meetings usually last for about 2 hours. You may meet socially after the meeting or have a longer meeting for a planning day or celebration.





### **Where should we meet?**

Circle meetings most often take place in people's homes. Or a quiet café. Or on Zoom.

### **What do I want my Circle to do?**

For example: I want my Circle to support me to make friends and go out more.



### **Why do I want you to be in my Circle?**

For example: I want you to be in my Circle because I trust you and you are an important person in my life.

# Circle Meetings

It's time to welcome your Circle members. This is a chance to share how you would like your life to be.

Every Circle is different. You are at the centre of your Circle. You are in control and will always be included in conversations and decisions.



## Getting ready for my first meeting

Tell your Circle members the date, time and location of the meeting. At a time that is best for everyone.

Ask a Circle member to help write notes about what you want to talk about. At your first meeting:

- Everyone introduces themselves to each other
- You explain what you want your Circle to do
- Everyone talks about what we can do together.



You can help make the people you invite feel welcome.

# What happens during meetings?

This is a list of what will happen every time your Circle meets.

## Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Acknowledgment of Country
3. Apologies
4. Actions to follow up on
5. Circle updates
6. Date of next meeting

Someone will take notes from the meeting to share with all of the Circle members.

# What happens between meetings?

Everyone in your Circle will have a task or action to do between meetings.

These will be ideas you discussed during the meeting.



Like new things you want to try. It may be changes you would like to make in your life.



**Circles change over time. We will talk with you about new ideas and goals. You may decide to invite others to join your Circle of Support.**



**Someone in your Circle may decide to become the facilitator. We will support them to do this.**

# Circles of Support Agreement

It is good for everyone to agree on the purpose of your Circle and what has to be done to support you.

## My Circle of Support Meetings

Will be held on [day and time]

-----

Will be held every [how often]....

-----

Will go for [how long]....

-----

Will be held at [venue]....

(Circle Members can also choose to attend via Zoom.)

-----

We all agree to be Circle members for a period of one year to begin with.

**(For you)**

I agree to have a Circle of support. I will share my ideas with Circle members. I will work with them to make changes for the better in my life.

**(For Circle members)**

We agree that between meetings we will have tasks or actions to do to support you to reach your goals.

**(For Facilitators)**

We agree to work with you to build your Circle of Support and to co-facilitate your Circle for one year.

To be signed by:

-----  
Person at the centre of the Circle

-----  
Circle members

-----  
Circle facilitators

# Circle Meeting Review

We will check in regularly to see if the Circle is working well for everyone.

After one year we will decide if you would like to continue to have a Circle of Support.

What did I like most about my Circle?



What could be improved?





# Information on Circles of Support

- **The National Resource Centre for Circles of Support and Microboards (COSAM)** has lots of useful resources. Including some guiding principles for Circles. Click [here](#).
- **The Community Living Project** has more resources. Click [here](#).
- **Resourcing Inclusive Communities** provides information and resources for families of people with developmental disability in NSW. Click [here](#).
- This website tells the story of Adam's Circle and how they supported him to move out of home. Click [here](#).
- Resources and wisdom are available from **Judith Snow**, who is credited with establishing the first Circle of Support in Canada in the 1990s. Click [here](#).

Please contact us at DDAlliance to find out more  
[tammy@ddalliance.org.au](mailto:tammy@ddalliance.org.au)

<http://www.ddalliance.org.au/circles-widen.html>

