

WELCOME!

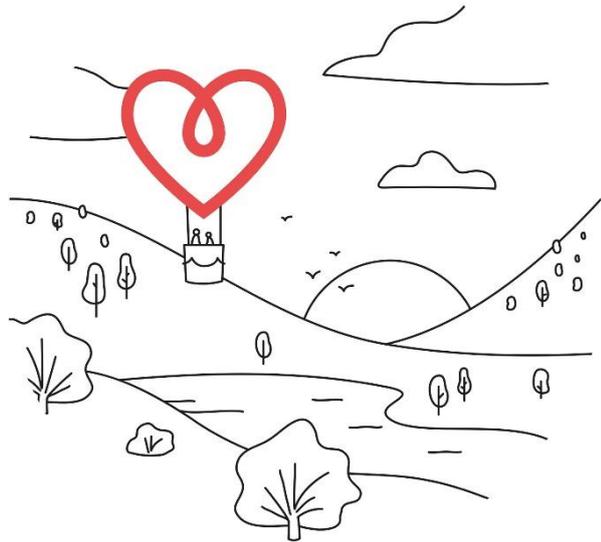
We appreciate your openness, curiosity and bravery for accepting our invitation to join and/or host an Appreciative Circle.

"People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don't find myself saying, "Soften the orange a bit on the right hand corner." I don't try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds."

Carl R. Rogers, *A Way of Being*

Appreciation: The ability to acknowledge and value the intrinsic qualities of someone or something; wonderment; a feeling of awe; enthusiasm for a discovery or seeing something that was out of sight before; gratitude; recognition; a more connected, new understanding of something, someone or a situation.

APPRECIATION CIRCLE



How it works?

Duration: between 45 and 60 minutes

This time includes up to three appreciative questions for circle participants to share their appreciative thoughts and experiences.

Number of Participants: minimum 3 and maximum 16. This is a comfortable number for everyone to be able to listen to each other and share.

The Appreciation Project - TODOS OS DIREITOS RESERVADOS

O Círculo Apreciativo é uma reunião on-line para experienciar apreço e gratidão em nossas vidas. Não é uma intervenção terapêutica nem envolve qualquer aconselhamento, prestação de serviços nem orientação médica.

How To do it: Rounds

During the rounds, each one will have their turn to speak. The participant who feels ready to contribute can start.

After contributing his/her thought, the floor is given to the person on their left or right side and so on, that is, the round continues clockwise or counter-clockwise, as per the appreciative circle facilitator invitation.

If you are hosting the appreciative circle online - remember to set up a virtual table (see here) with participants' names so that everyone may visually who "is" on their left and on their right. No one is required to share.

If a participant wishes to share but is not ready at the time the round reaches him/her, the host may pass the turn and return to him or her at the end of the round.

Note that the rounds do not imply response, dialogue or debate; When I finish my contribution, I turn to the next person until everyone has contributed. When the round is finished, a new appreciative question is offered by the host. In this way, no one responds or debates contributions brought by others; participants just welcome, receive openly and continue in the circle flow.

Appreciative Questions Samples:

Appreciative questions are those that connect us with the ability to see something new in a situation, to resignify events, recognize hidden qualities or potentials, connect with someone or something from a generous and loving place in ourselves.

Examples of appreciative questions:

1. What am I celebrating today / this week?
2. What qualities did I discover in myself this month that I didn't know I had?
3. While connecting to a challenging situation I am facing, where have I found support, and which qualities do I recognize in this person / something that has supported me?
4. When I review the achievements I'm most proud of, can I name 3 people who helped me get there? What characteristics do I admire in them?
5. Look around at your surroundings: what is most beautiful about this place?
6. Go over your day yesterday and see if you've had any unusual encounters with anyone: what did you find out about this person / relationship you didn't know yet?
7. What do you enjoy most about your neighborhood (or where you grew up)?
8. What is your favorite place in town and why? (What emotions does this place arouse in you?)
9. What have you learned this week?
10. At the end of the circle: Appreciate a quality in the person on your left / right.

And so many others! Remember to share any appreciative questions you may have created in your own circle with us, so that we can make them available online to other participants.

The host:

As an Appreciative Circle host, you are responsible for sharing and upholding the guidelines below, helping participants feel more comfortable and present as they reach the goal of enjoying life and flooding their bodies with happy hormones such as oxytocin.

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Invitation:

We invite everyone to set aside our beautiful (and I must say, very sharp!) problem solving skills and critical skills, if only for a few minutes, as well, our thoughts on what would be “worthy of appreciation”, and put our energy only at taking each other in as sunsets.

Circle Principles:

- 1 - Positivity: Focus on the Positive
- 2 - Confidentiality: what happens in the circle stays in the circle
- 4- Zeal/Care: be caring towards yourself, others and the group.
- 5 - Openness: Be open to what may emerge.
- 6- Presence: Listen carefully and speak with intention
- 8 - Do not give advice. Do not agree or disagree with what was shared into the circle. Just welcome contributions with curiosity and generosity.

* Positivity: In this context, the idea of being positive relates to the ability to train the way we look at situations. The idea is not to disregard the challenges or difficulties. But to be able to reprogram our way of perceiving situations and train our mental and emotional ability to identify and connect with things that nurture, enjoy and expand. In this way, get to see the opportunities that are revealed in times of crisis.

Step by step:

- 1 - Set up a circle so that everyone can see each other's faces (if online, ask participants to have their cameras turned on).
- 2 - The host opens the circle: introduces its way of operating and explains its guidelines (tip: if you want to prepare the environment, write some guidelines on paper and put them on the wall, or if you host the circle online, send them in advance to the other participants).
- 3 - Ask people to introduce themselves briefly: Name and something about themselves.
- 4 - Remember the principles of the Appreciative Circle (see above).
- 5 - Bring the first appreciative question and invite whoever is ready to get started (tip: remember that the first question is a warm-up and an invitation to connect, so pick a light question that brings people into the present moment, into this circle).
- 6 - The first person who is ready to contribute will share an appreciative thought or experience based on the question offered.
- 7 - The other participants just listen attentively and do not interrupt with questions or observations.
- 8 - After the first sharing, a round starts (clockwise or counterclockwise, according to the invite made by the host). During the round, each participant, one at a time, will make an appreciative contribution that must be brief, sincere and specific. Remember: No one is obliged to speak.
- 9 - It is recommended that the host watches the time: during a 45 to 60 minute Appreciative Circle in which there is lightness and flow, it is usually possible to offer up to 3 appreciative questions (thus, 3 rounds, one question for each round), in addition to the brief introduction round.

10 - Closing with thanks. Check if there are any questions or queries left about the process, share announcements, schedule the next meeting, etc.

NOTE: Here you will find examples of appreciative questions to take to the rounds. It's beautiful when the participants themselves begin to offer appreciative questions - at the here and now - which relate to the group's energy in that day. Take note of the appreciative questions that come up in your groups and share with us in the comments below. We will add the questions to the list and we will be honored to share those created by hosts who practice Appreciative Circles around the world.

Goal:

Our goal is to focus on the positive side - newly discovered - of the experiences, even of the most painful and challenging stories. Every story and experience has multiple sides. And they are all important. Since this is an appreciative circle, we are going straight to the appreciative side of things.

Here below you will find the Appreciative Circle guidelines. I wrote them as DOs and DON'Ts, and I hope you find them useful.

GUIDELINES FOR APPRECIATIVE CIRCLE

DOs	DON'Ts
<p>Focus on the Positive</p> <p>Focus on the positive quality of the situation / person / experience you want to appreciate. This will allow us to reach the state in which oxytocin is released.</p>	<p>Refrain from caveats or counter arguments</p> <p>Do not use expressions such as "despite", "but" and "yet". True appreciation is an unconditional experience and speaking negatively or critically during your contribution in the circle will prevent you from reaching a state of greater relaxation.</p>

<p>Stick to the essentials</p> <p>Be succinct (brief) and specific, go to the essence of what you want to offer to the circle. This way everyone will have a chance to contribute.</p>	<p>Do not contextualise</p> <p>Do not share the background story or the full experience that led to your appreciative insight.</p>
<p>Practice kindness</p> <p>Be kind to others and also to yourself - remember that we are all different and as human beings we seek connection and appreciation. Be kind to yourself if you hear things that make you uncomfortable.</p>	<p>Disregard your internal judgment</p> <p>Do not judge what others are saying - whether agreeing or disagreeing. All experiences are sacred and valuable and once shared they belong to the circle. Do not offer advice or solutions to anything that has been shared.</p>
<p>Speak in I language (1st person)</p> <p>Speak in the first person "me"/"I" (instead of "us", "all of us", "everyone", "women", "men"...), that is, talk about your personal experience.</p>	<p>Avoid generalizations</p> <p>Do not speak on behalf of others in this circle by using statements like "we think, we feel, all of us experience". Truth is you don't know what other people's experience is, unless you invited them to share.</p>
<p>Allow yourself to be surprised</p> <p>Come open, curious and humble.</p>	<p>Take care of this safe space</p> <p>Do not share what was brought into the circle with people outside the circle. Confidentiality is key.</p>

<p>Practice presence</p> <p>Be very present to others while they are sharing, as the more experiences you truly hear and connect to, the more oxytocin will be released.</p> <p>For example, if you shared 1 appreciative thought and listened to 11 other contributions, you will have had 12 appreciative experiences during the circle.</p>	<p>Turn off/Turn down the voice of your mind</p> <p>Don't get lost in your thoughts or daydreams while others talk and share their own appreciative experiences.</p> <p>If you stay enclosed in your own experience, you will lose valuable opportunities to feel the appreciation that is being shared by others.</p>
<p>Observe, observe, observe</p> <p>Notice what happens when you share your own appreciative thoughts and listen to others. Do not judge whether it is positive or negative, just observe yourself.</p>	<p>Silence is also part of the conversation</p> <p>Do not participate for the sake of participating. Be honest and keep your silence if that's the most beautiful thing you can offer the circle at this very moment.</p>

If you have any questions, just email us at integralbarbara@gmail.com and we will be happy to learn from you. This is a new experience for many of us and we are all learners!