

Five-Step Online Check-In Circle Following Traumatic Incidents: Services Working With Children and Young People



Early Learning Initiative
National College of Ireland

1

Opening Circle—What is your energy level level (1 being low, 10 being high)? Tell us about one person that you have **connected** with today (online or face-to-face).



After getting the news that there had been a fight and that someone had passed away, how did you **feel**?
How do you feel **now**?

2



When confusing, upsetting, or frightening things happen, are there adults in your life who are available to provide you with **support**? Who are they?

3

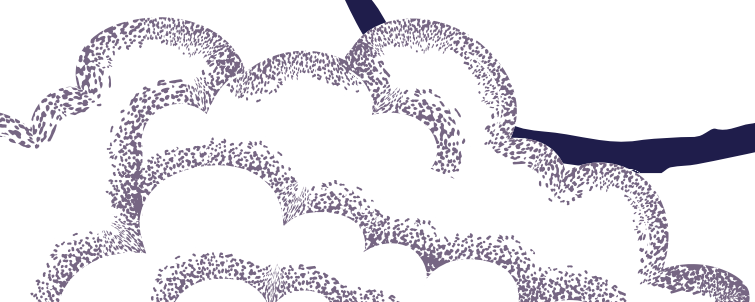
What is your favourite song to cheer you up or make you **feel better**? (encourage each participant to play a little piece of their chosen song in the online chat platform)

4



5

Closing Circle—During this circle I felt **connected** when...
What tickles your funny bone—something you can laugh at even during times like this? (a joke, a film, something funny you saw online, etc.)



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Five-Step Online Check-In Circle: Suggestions For Each Step



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Intention

Welcome the group. Explain that you are going to have a virtual circle/check-in today to discuss how the 'incident' has impacted you and your community (you can call the incident whatever feels comfortable, in this instance, maybe 'discuss what happened last Wednesday night and how it has impacted...' or 'discuss how Glen's passing/death has impacted...').

Acknowledge that the young people may know those involved, on both sides, and that this is an opportunity to talk about how it is affecting them—not to blame, shame or spread gossip or rumours. We know people are hurting and we wouldn't want to worsen that pain—this is an opportunity to talk about how we're feeling about what happened, and if there's anything we can do as a group to support that.

1

Before opening the circle, introduce a **listening piece**, something you have in your home i.e. a ball or a soft toy, and encourage participants to do the same. Maybe share a story about your listening piece e.g. "this was a gift from my sister", if young people do the same with theirs they might be less likely to disrespect another's piece as they know its importance/meaning. Then go through some guidelines for taking part in circles, whether face-to-face or online:

- Respect the listening piece—speak honestly only when you have it, and listen deeply when you don't
- Speak and listen in keeping with your values e.g. kindness, calmness, and equality etc.
- Take the time you need to speak, while remembering that others may like to share as well
- Remember that's it's ok if you don't want to speak, you can 'pass' your turn, maybe you'll remember something or feel like sharing your thoughts later on
- Honour privacy – what we share in the circle, stays in circle. This includes recordings or screenshots.
- Look after yourself and others – if the conversation gets too much you can ask for a break, or an activity to lighten the mood

2

Go fully around, or complete a full 'pass' of the circle—asking **each** question one at a time, to **each** participant. Remember to **model** the response yourself first. If facilitating the group on your own you should start each 'pass'. If you have a colleague co-facilitating, one of you might start each pass, and the other finish. After you have modelled, it's a good idea to go around the circle in the same sequence e.g. alphabetically, by age, by where they appear on your screen, and to continue that sequence throughout. If you're working with a co-facilitator you could go clockwise then anti-clockwise after one or two questions, if you want to give the 'first' young person responding a break (just remember to ask **everyone** in the circle each question—drawing a physical circle with names or list on a notepad helps me). It's ok if they pass sometimes, once they have been given an opportunity to share.

3

The questions asked are linked to the six restorative questions that we use to repair harm, while also allowing you to gain an understanding of feelings and needs, and what young people might be experiencing and how we can support each other through this difficult time. If young people are finding it difficult to express how they're feeling or how they've been affected in words, giving a numbered response is often easier e.g. on a scale of 1 to 10, how affected are you by this, 1 being not at all, 10 being very affected. If using Zoom/Teams/House Party apps to connect, utilise the digital whiteboards to encourage young people to write or draw what they're feeling or experiencing together if this is easier.

4

After discussing difficult or uncomfortable feelings or experiences always make sure to bring your circle to a close with one (or more) positive questions. If possible, include an **energising** activity or topic for discussion e.g. a song, a game, an action etc. It is important, even when difficult situations are ongoing, to end with a sense of **positive possibilities** and shared hope.

5

Before closing the circle check with participants that they have all had an opportunity to share what they are comfortable with sharing, ask questions, or seek support e.g. 'Is there anything anyone would like to add before we close our circle?' In closing the circle encourage young people to continue to **connect** with one another and support each other, to cultivate a sense of connection and support, even when physically we might be far apart.