

# CONCENTRIC CIRCLE CONVERSATIONS

While simply sitting down to talk about our experiences with intimate violence may seem obvious, it's actually pretty rare. Few accessible opportunities exist to deeply explore our experiences living with and surviving the traumatic events that occurred, and few spaces exist to do so in community. Hosted in partnership with local anti-violence community organizations, Consentric Circles are about collaboratively making meaning of our traumatic experiences in the context of our community. We co-explore the impacts of our trauma, identify patterns between our survival experiences, dismantle the myths & misunderstandings we've encountered, and reimagine the course of our healing with creative systemic solutions.

Held both in person and online, participants can include survivors, allies, family, partners, mentors, community stakeholders and first responders, and in some cases, coordinated to include persons who have committed harm. Scaffolded with learning resources, these deep group acknowledgement opportunities may take place over multiple or ongoing sessions, or be held all in one day. In addition to a Consentric Circle facilitator, conversations include a community partner facilitator(s) and a well being advocate, in addition to follow up resources sent to participants for continued support, discussion and learning.

## WELCOME AND SIGN IN

After completing a Consentric Circles registration form, participants will receive a Welcome Email containing this Overview of the conversation, Zoom link and confirmation of the dates and times for the conversation, including contact info for further questions. On the day, we will open up the Zoom Room 15 minutes early to allow folks to check-in and get set up, and if needed, receive support on troubleshooting tech issues.

## IDENTITIES AND INTRODUCTIONS

It's important to know who's in the room creating this community and how we're showing up today. We'll have an opportunity to introduce ourselves, including our preferred pronouns and ways we identify. Depending on where we are in our healing, or simply that day, we may embody just one identity, or live at the intersection of many. This is an chance to identify whose voices will be centered in the conversation - the survivors - and get to know the other community members who've showed up for us that day. Nothing is mandatory; everything is by choice.

**SURVIVOR** : I identify as a survivor; I have experienced intimate harm firsthand; I am part of a community, and am a stakeholder in my own healing and justice

**COMMUNITY MEMBER / ALLY**: I have someone in my life or at a distance who has experienced intimate harm; I'm looking for the language and tools to support them

**ADVOCATE**: I work to support and elevate people who have suffered intimate harm; I'm looking to calibrate my support

**COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS**: I am a member of this community, which makes me a stakeholder in healing harm; I may be able to influence the responses and systems survivors interact with

**FACILITATORS**: I am with the Consentric Circle team or the Community Partner Organization, here to facilitate a safe and constructive space for the survivors in the room

# CONVERSATION PRACTICES AND COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

## **EMBRACE VULNERABILITY AS A STRENGTH**

Practice courage around uncertainty, risk, or emotional exposure. Vulnerability involves identifying our emotions and cultivates intimate, human connection through the sharing of truths

## **LEARNING GOES, STORIES STAY**

Share from the I - don't volunteer others or share their stories without their explicit consent. Let's ensure that this remains a comfortable space and that what is shared here, stays here.

## **ENGAGE IN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND VALIDATION**

Practice acceptance of experiential truth and appreciation for the complex lived experiences of trauma. Affirm that a person's experiences are valid and of value to yourself and your community. Acknowledgement doesn't just come through words - contribute your support with your body language too.

## **OWN OUR ACCOUNTABILITY**

Practice reducing harm. We all have the capacity to harm and be harmed. Willingly take initiative, accept responsibility and own our actions and their impact on others. If you have created harm, address it, if you see harm being done, address it. No harm happens in a vacuum

## **STEP FORWARD, STEP BACK**

We strive to create a space of equity, where every voice has equal opportunity to be heard. We also recognize that there are existing dynamics of power that enter the room before we do. To allow for rebalancing these structural dynamics, contribute your wisdom and be aware of how much you're sharing to create space for other voices

## **RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION**

There's a difference between sharing wisdom and giving advice - we're here to build on each other, not to correct each other's personal journeys. Hold awareness for not just what you say, but how it can be received and what impact it may have.

## **CENTER THE HEALING, NOT THE VIOLENCE**

This is a space of shared learning. We find we get a lot more out of sharing our stories of survival, rather than comparing the violence we've experienced. We enter the conversation believing survivors, so you'll never be asked to prove yourself. While we didn't get a say in what happened to us, we go get to decide how we heal.

## **HONOR AUTHENTICITY IN YOURSELF & OTHERS**

Practice being genuine. Show up with your whole self, physically, culturally, emotionally & mentally

## **SURVIVORS ONLY \ FIRST SESSION**

### **OUR EXPERIENCE OF CONSENT**

- What does consent look like, sound like and feel like?
- Where has consent been present? Absent?
- What are the impacts of those experiences on our brains & bodies?
- What did we need? From our partners and/or perpetrators? From our community?

### **COMMUNICATING OUR CONSENT NARRATIVE**

- How do you communicate your own boundaries?
- What is challenging around setting and communicating those boundaries? What have you found useful?

## **SURVIVORS AND ALLIES \ SECOND SESSION**

### **COMMUNICATING OUR CONSENT CULTURE**

- What would you want your community to know about the presence or absence of consent and its impact?
- Which parts of our culture are problematic when it comes to consent?
- What ideas do we have around redesigning for or dismantling those consent barriers?

### **CULTIVATING CONSENT CULTURE**

- What does this look like long term? Who would need to be part of the conversation? What would be required to be part of that conversation?
- Based on what you've heard today, where can you shift cultures of consent in your life?
- How can practicing more consent serve your micro-cultures and relations?

## **DISCUSSION TOPICS**

The conversation incorporates reflective, written, verbal and experiential ways through which we can share, connect and better understand our experiences with intimate trauma and will involve some or all of the following questions. But the topics you'd like to address, the questions you raise, will be the main driver for the questions we ultimately explore.