



# Using Circles to Build Positive Relationships:

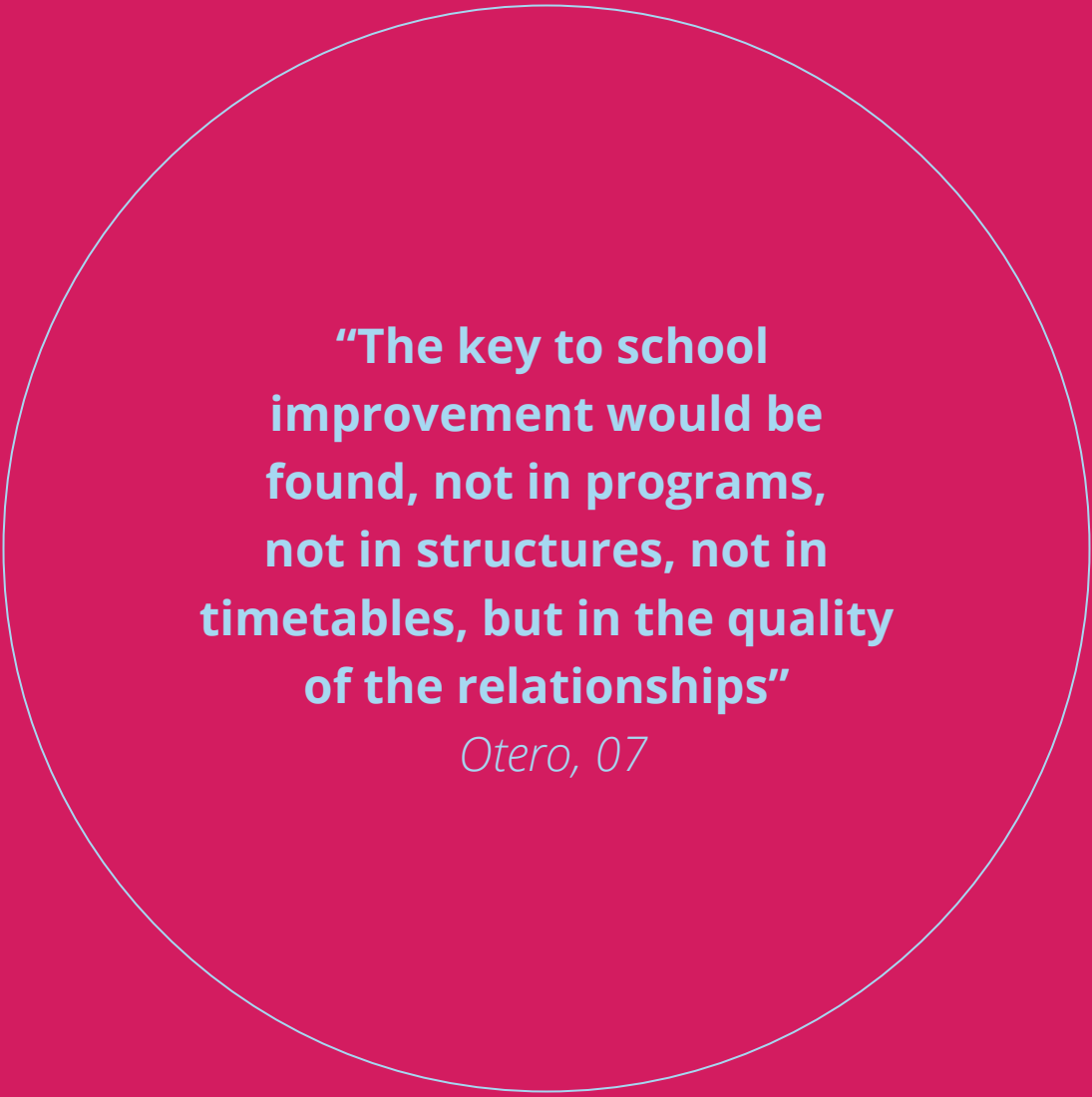
A PRACTICAL GUIDE

BY KRISTY ELLIOTT




**Kristy Elliott**, Director and Senior Trainer at Restorative Pathways trains and supports schools implementing Restorative Practice approaches to relationship management. An essential element of this approach utilises a unique circle structure as the vehicle for building positive relationships, delivering curriculum and developing social and emotional capabilities in staff, students and community. The first part of this guide summarises the theoretical underpinnings of using circles and provides readers with practical information to begin implementing circles with young people in schools and colleagues in workplaces. Two key components of Kristy's circles are mixers and energisers. The second part of this guide describes these components in greater detail and provides readers with examples of enjoyable activities they can begin to use immediately in their setting.

*We believe you will enjoy this practical guide so feel free to provide feedback or share your circle stories via [kristy@restorativepathways.com.au](mailto:kristy@restorativepathways.com.au), we would love to hear from you!*



**"The key to school  
improvement would be  
found, not in programs,  
not in structures, not in  
timetables, but in the quality  
of the relationships"**

*Otero, 07*



**T**wenty-first century learners are individuals who can manage their own wellbeing, relate well to others, make informed decisions about their lives, are citizens who behave with ethical integrity and relate to and communicate across cultures. Teaching the students of today to become the learners of tomorrow is more about fostering a love of learning rather than imparting knowledge. Success relies on the development and enhancement of positive relationships within school communities. It is increasingly evident that we must address the social emotional nature of teaching and learning and the impact positive (and negative or non-existent) relationships have on students and school communities. On a positive note we generally don't have to look too far to see these priorities reflected in curriculum innovation and implementation in the current educational era.

Implementing Restorative Practices and specifically circle structures in schools is an authentic and effective method of facilitating the development of positive relationships and developing social and emotional capabilities of young people and educators alike. When building positive relationships becomes a priority for schools, students report increased feelings of belonging, self-worth and connectedness which results in enhanced student participation, engagement, achievement and positive wellbeing.

## **Social and Emotional Literacy (SEL)**

Social and emotional literacy is not a program; it is a values-based concept concerned with relationships and societal connection. It is the development of knowledge and skills within individuals, systems and communities. The Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning or CASEL (a leading USA organisation developing the enhancement of SEL) defines Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as 'the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain positive relationships with others; and make responsible decisions'.

CASEL identifies five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioural competencies within SEL, these are also the generally agreed upon areas of social emotional intelligence globally:

- Self-Management
- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision-Making
- Relationship Skills

A large research synthesis of 213 school based SEL programs in schools found significant improvements in the following areas (Durlak, Weissberg et. al, 2011):

- Student academic performance
- Increased attendance
- Less disruptive behaviours
- Students like school more
- Less suspensions/detentions

It was also found that the programs with the best outcomes were implemented for consecutive years, were interactive (such as using circles as a method of delivery) and implemented school wide (CASEL, Safe and Sound, 2005).

Recently the focus has shifted to the social emotional competencies of teachers and the impact this has on job satisfaction, retention, student social emotional learning and student academic achievement. Teachers with high level competency in SEL effectively model these daily, plan to teach SEL competencies regularly, display positive affect and build positive relationships with students all of which contribute to increased student learning outcomes (Jones, Bouffard & Weissbourd, 2013). The strategic implementation of circles effectively develops and enhances social emotional learning in schools.

## Circles

The use of circles as a method of communication within communities is an ancient tradition. Circles symbolise unity, inclusion, equality, protection, participation and cooperation. Over time the strategy has been adapted for decision making, conflict resolution and discussion by various fields such as teachers, social workers and the justice system.

Circles in schools uses a structured framework with groups and takes place regularly throughout the week, varying in length and content depending on the purpose and age of the participants. Importantly, groups co-create guidelines to ensure the principles can be met. These might include the right to pass, no put-downs, and speak from the heart. When used regularly and intentionally, schools report the following outcomes:

- Stronger Relationships
- Engagement and participation
- Improved attendance
- Reduction in conflict and violence
- Enhanced cooperation and community
- Resilience
- Increased social capital
- Reduction in referrals
- Increased emotional literacy
- Enhanced health and wellbeing
- Increased sense of belonging and connectedness
- Positive attitudes

## Principles of Circles

The use of circles as a pedagogy is more than simply forming a circle to play games or discuss a selected topic. Pedagogy refers to the mechanisms of teaching, and circle pedagogy speaks to a philosophical position of how the art of teaching takes place in schools. To embrace circle pedagogy means to embrace the principles of circles.

**Having Fun:** participants who have fun together experience a greater sense of connection and belonging. We know that positive emotion broadens our perspective and builds lasting psychological and social resources (Fredrickson, 2009). Circles promote a sense of belonging by fostering positive feelings including shared joy and laughter.

**Equality & Democracy:** Everyone is encouraged and given the opportunity to participate and speak if they wish to.

**Inclusion:** Every member of the learning community (i.e., class, school), has the right to participate in circle sessions, they are never denied the right because of their abilities, lagging skills, or challenging behaviours. Our vulnerable young people need circle experiences the most.

**Respect:** Not putting anyone down either verbally or non-verbally. This includes taking turns to speak and to listen, not interjecting, laughing or gesturing unkindly. Creating group-owned guidelines for circle sessions aids in developing and encouraging respect.

**Safety & Choice:** The right to pass is an important inclusion in circle sessions. Participants should not feel as though they have to speak. It takes some participants a while to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas. Using smaller groupings, and using circles frequently builds safety and confidence quicker.

**Agency:** Participants are given structured opportunities to discuss and collaborate with others. They can also co-create and encourage circle guidelines and take part in making the talking piece. All of this makes it more likely they will take some responsibility for adhering to the group norms.

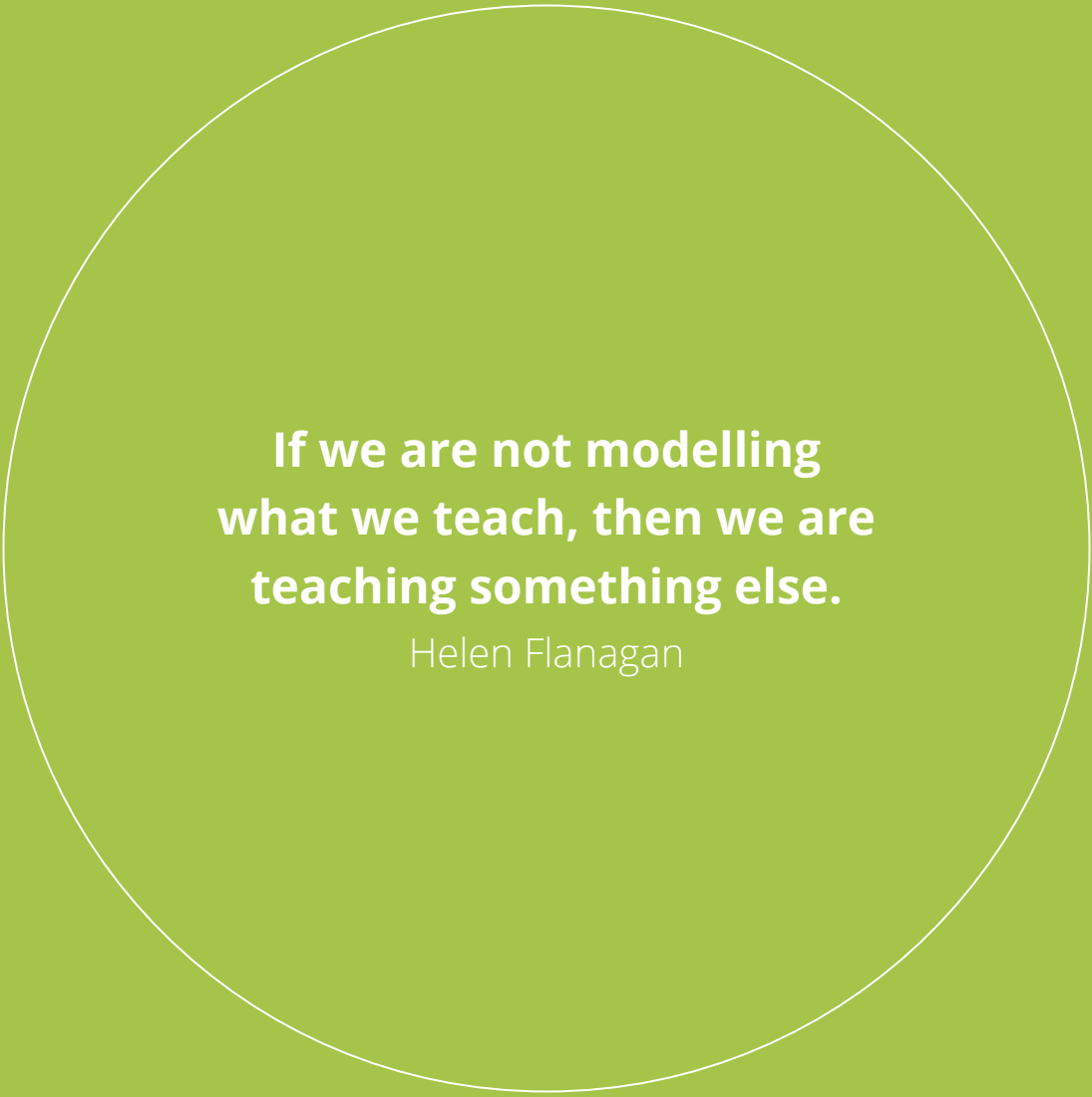
## Role of facilitator

The role of the facilitator is not to teach, but to manage the flow of proceedings while avoiding taking control. To teach is defined as 'to cause to acquire knowledge or skill in some field', but to facilitate is defined as 'to free from obstruction or difficulty' (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2021).

Facilitating rather than teaching circles is more aligned with the principles of circle pedagogy - equity, democracy, inclusion, agency, and choice. It also leaves the role open for anyone, not just the assigned teacher in the room. We want the participants to engage with the pedagogy, to own the process, and when ready, to facilitate circles too.

An effective facilitator:

- Plans for meaningful circles
- Guides the process
- Participates in all activities, modelling appropriate behaviour
- Is positive
- Is sensitive to the needs of the participants and individual circumstances
- Introduces activities adequately
- Keeps the flow of the circle
- Is flexible and changes activities if the need arises
- Offers the choice to participate or not
- Encourages participants to take a leadership role



**If we are not modelling  
what we teach, then we are  
teaching something else.**

Helen Flanagan



## A Talking Piece

The talking stick is based on Native American tradition and was commonly used in council circles to decide who had the right to speak. In Native American lore the talking stick is said to impart the courage to speak the truth to the one who wields it. Talking sticks were often carved from wood and may also include feathers, bones, fur, shells, hair or coloured beads, often representing the particular tribe it belongs to.

Similarly, in schools a talking piece ensures that communication within the circle is shared among all participants; it is a visual and kinesthetic reminder that everyone has the right to speak their heart truth and be heard. A talking piece is an item generally agreed upon by the group and is powerful when it is created by the group such as decorating and signing a stick. In schools, talking pieces can also be a soft toy, a small ball, a puppet or another symbolic item.

When introducing circles, and the use of the talking stick, it is helpful to discuss the purpose of the talking piece:

- Everyone has an opportunity to speak
- Participants are encouraged to listen with an open heart
- It builds trust and safety in the community
- It builds collaborative and team skills (e.g., turn taking, focus)
- It is a reminder of the rights and responsibilities of participants
- It is a symbol of the sanctity of the circle and the community of learners in it





Example of class made talking stick

## A General Framework for Circles

The type of circle you are facilitating will determine the structure of the circle, however as a guide, most circles can use the general structure below. When introducing circles, it can be helpful to teach the various components separately; this is particularly important when working with younger students.

**Check In:** an initial go-round so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. It might be in the form of a sentence starter such as 'over the weekend I...' or 'my favourite sport is ...'. Or you might use a picture card as a prompt for students to speak to.

**Mixer:** a game that ensures everyone mixes up around the circle and has opportunities to work with many other people. (see mixer section for further details and examples)

**Central Activity:** this is the part of the circle that you will have planned carefully; it reflects the learning intention or teaching moment. You might have a curriculum focus, a social emotional learning focus or a relational/community building focus. Activities or tasks that require collaboration are best as circles are designed to help build community and relationships.

**Debrief:** a sharing/reflection/review of what has been learned or discussed. You may want to debrief as part of the check-out section rather than before the energiser.

**Energiser:** a game to increase energy levels of the group, and to promote fun and laughter. (see energiser section for further details and examples)

**Check out:** similar to the check-in but this closes the circle experience. A go-round with a sentence starter or an evaluative tool. For example, 'one thing I've enjoyed today is ...' or rate the session out of five using your fingers.



## Types of Circles

Various forms of circles have a place in our schools. When we take part in circles we are involved in a democratic process with a focus on relationships and collective responsibility. Participation enhances feelings of respect and belonging and encourages participants to own their actions. Students feel able to express themselves in a safe environment with the inherent understanding they will be treated fairly.

The following list outlines some of the types of circles that can be implemented in schools:

### *A celebration circle*

A birthday, special event or achievement.

### *Discussion circles*

Moral dilemmas.

Using political cartoons/complex issues – delve into youth understandings. E.g. Prejudice - pass the talking piece around asking:

What does that mean to you?

What does it mean to this country?

Describe a personal experience of feeling prejudice

What can we do?

### *Problem-solving circles*

Given real life scenarios, discuss proactive ways of solving the problem. This enables students to build skill and capacity to deal with possible issues in the future.

### *Curriculum based*

Build a circle around a numeracy/literacy/inquiry learning intention.

### *Dialogue circles*

Discussing and agreeing upon the common courtesies or norms of the group or classroom (negotiating classroom rules, values, planning class excursions).

### *Reviewing curriculum*

How do we feel about.....? How can we make this topic more relevant? Who would like some support or a buddy to work through these curriculum issues? Who is willing to be that buddy?

### *A reflection or evaluation circle*

What did we learn today, or what do I already know (or from that session).

### *A social emotional learning circle*

Most SEL programs can be effectively run in circles. The CASEL five key competencies directly lend themselves to circle style lessons.

## Resources

It is a good idea to create a circle resource kit to be housed in classrooms for quick and easy access.

Some general resources to put into a 'circle kit' might include:

- A talking piece
- Emotional literacy cards (Bears or Stones from St Lukes Innovative Resources)
- Stimulus material such as books, stories or images
- Mixer activities such as old postcards cut up into jigsaws, a deck of cards, or coloured counters
- Music
- A list of favourite games and the materials needed to play them
- The Yellow Book of Games and Energisers by Jayaraja & Erwin Tielemans
- Working in Circles in Primary and Secondary Classrooms by Margaret Armstrong and David Vinegrad

For a more comprehensive list of resources for circles visit the Resources section at [www.restorativepathways.com.au](http://www.restorativepathways.com.au).

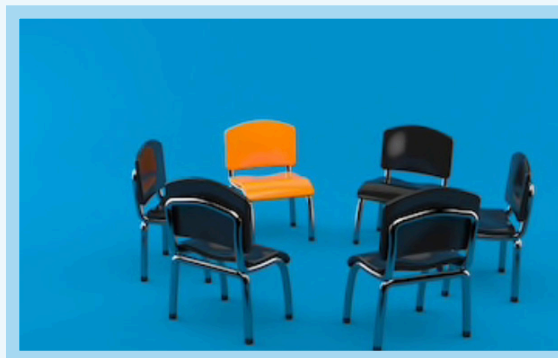


## MIXERS

Feeling connected to your peers and teachers is a protective barrier against risky behaviours later in life. The need to belong and feel significant among your peers is fundamental for positive wellbeing and mental health. Mixers are fun games designed to safely and fairly create new groups of participants and encourage connection between people. They are often fun games you've played before and some can be used as energisers as well. The number of people you require in each new group will determine the type of mixer activity you select. Many classroom learning activities also lend themselves to be mixers; as a bonus you can reinforce learning concepts whilst having fun! Mixers gently force us out of our comfort zone and encourage new connections with others.

### WARM WIND BLOWS

Make a circle of players seated in chairs, with one less chair than players. Player one begins in the middle of the circle and makes a statement that is likely to be common to many others in the circle, for example, 'warm wind blows if you ate toast for breakfast'. If this statement relates to a player, they must stand and move to a vacant chair – note that player one is also looking for a new chair. Each time a statement is made, and players move, a new player will be left standing in the centre of the circle. If a player calls out 'hurricane' every player must move. To end the game the facilitator quietly brings an additional chair back into the circle. After playing this game the group should be well and truly mixed up!



### JIGSAW PIECES

Cut up pictures into jigsaw pieces (you determine the number of pieces required). Postcards and old calendars work particularly well. Spread them face down in the centre of the circle and invite participants to select a piece. On 'go' all participants find the matching pieces and sit together forming their picture and their group.



### **TARGET NUMBER**

Give each participant a numbered card from a regular deck, with Ace being 1. When you say 'go' they must find a compatible number so that between them it adds to the target number. For example, make 10, you might have a 6 and a 4 or make 20 you might have a 2 a 6 a 4 and an 8.



### **(SILENT) LINE UPS**

Instruct the group to line up in ascending or descending order according to birth month, height, house/apartment number etc. A challenge is to do so without speaking. Once in a line simply identify small groups according to the chosen activity.

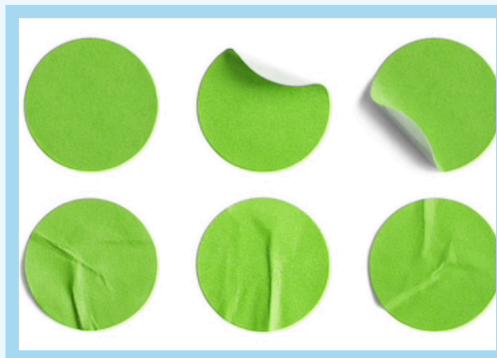
### **ROPES**

Cut up enough rope/wool/ribbon for 1 between 2. Place them in the centre of the circle and instruct the participants to come and select the end of one. Then watch them untangle to find their partner who is holding the other end.



### COLOURED DOTS/STICKERS/COUNTERS/STICKS

Decide on the number of participants required in each group. Stick coloured dots or stickers on small cards (or sticky name tags) so that there might be five green, five purple, five red and five yellow for a total group of twenty. Each person in the group receives one colour and makes a group with all like colours or alternatively a group including one of each colour. This can also be done with coloured plastic counters or popsicle sticks.



### DECK OF CARDS

Regular playing cards are one of the most cost effective and versatile mixing tools available (the large cards are great too). Various groups can be made such as matching suits or numbers, one of each suit, black or red, odds and evens etc.

### CARD MATCHING ACTIVITIES

Any form of cards that require matching or grouping are great to mix people up. For example, clock faces showing either digital or analogue time, compound words cut in half, homophones, animals with their sounds, opposites, etc. Place the cards in the centre of the circle face down and invite participants to select one. On 'go' they mingle to find their match.





### **SHAKE IT!**

Make shakers using small bubble canisters (empty the bubble mixture out first!) Place different items inside the canisters such as rice, fluff ball, sultana, nuts, stones, etc making 4-5 of each type of sound. Every participant selects a canister and listens to other shakers to find 'like sounds' which becomes their group.

### **VAMOOSH!**

Sit in a large circle. The facilitator gives every participant the name of an animal, food or object (use only 4 and repeat them). The facilitator begins to tell a story whilst walking around the inside of the circle. When the animal/food/object name is used those participants with that name follow the facilitator moving around the inner circle as the story continues. The facilitator finishes the story by incorporating 'vamoosh!' and everyone races back to an empty seat. The last person standing is now the story teller. Stop the game when the group is sufficiently mixed up.





## ENERGISERS

Energisers are short, fun games designed to be played in groups or teams. Forming a crucial part of the circle structure, energisers bring energy and focus back into a group following the content section. They are also great to use any time in classrooms with young people to get them moving around and give their brain a break or with staff during or after meetings. Not that you need an excuse to inject some fun into your world, but research shows that regular kinesthetic activity and having fun with others positively impacts relationships, wellbeing, mental health, achievement and cognition.



### PULL MY FINGER

Stand in a circle as a group, place your left-hand palm up to the ceiling, right hand pointer finger touching person's palm on your right. When a caller says GO you attempt to catch the finger on your left but not get your own finger caught by the person on your right.

### SHAKING ELBOWS

Number off 1-4 around the circle. Then give each number an action –

- 1 hand on head
- 2 hands on shoulders
- 3 hands on waist
- 4 hands on knees

The task on 'go' is to shake elbows with as many members of the group as you can before time's up.



### I SIT HERE

Everyone is to be seated in a circle and then put an extra chair in the circle. Move to sit in the spare chair and say, 'I sit here'. The person next to the vacant chair moves into it and says, 'in this chair'. The person next to the vacant chair now moves into it and says 'beside my friend (insert friends name). the person whose name was called races over to the empty chair. The two people on opposite sides of the newly vacated chair 'race' for possession of the new chair and the game begins again when they say, 'I sit here'.

### **HOWDY DOODY**

This game is like a grown-up version of duck duck goose. The group stands in a circle each of them behind a chair. The facilitator puts their chair outside of the circle so that there are more people than chairs. They wander around the outside of the circle, tapping someone on the shoulder of their choosing. That person then moves in the opposite direction around the circle so that both players meet at some point. When this happens, players shake hands and say 'howdy doody' before continuing in the same direction they started racing back to the vacant spot. The person who does not get back first now begins the game again by wandering around and tapping a shoulder.



### **HOOP RACE**

Participants stand in a circle and join hands. A hoop is passed around the circle without breaking the chain of hands. Players have to work as a team to get the hoop over and/or under each player to get it back to the start. This can be timed or you can have two circles racing each other to make it competitive.

### **CATCH A THIEF**

Every participant receives one numbered card from a normal deck of cards. Include one Ace and one Jack. The Ace is the detective and the Jack is the thief. Players do not show their card to anyone. On 'go' players mingle in the room and briefly flash their card to other participants as they wish. If you are flashed by the Jack/thief you must sit down in a chair. If you are flashed by the Ace/detective you simply remain in the game. The objective is for the detective to 'catch' the thief before everyone is sitting down.





### **TOOTHLESS FRUIT**

Each player gives themselves the name of a fruit and shares this around the circle. Player one begins by saying their fruit name and then the fruit name of another player, but they must not show their teeth when they speak. Roll your lips over your teeth to do this. If the other players see their teeth they must point and say 'teeth teeth teeth' all the while covering their own teeth with their lips.

### **BALL TOSS**

Players stand in a circle and make eye contact with another player, say that player's name then toss the ball to them. This is repeated until everyone has thrown and caught the ball once. Players are instructed to remember who they passed to as the process is now repeated, this time a little faster and with a second and third ball. Reversing the direction of the balls is a nice challenge too.



### **POPCORN**

Players sit in a circle of chairs. Designate a player one who 'pops up' out of their chair and says '1'. After this any player can stand and say '2', then '3' etc until the whole group is standing. The catch is that if more than one player stands and says the same number the group begins again at 1.

### **FALLING LEAF**

The facilitator stands in the middle of the circle and drops an A4 sheet of paper while calling a player's name simultaneously. The player has to catch it before it hits the ground, if they manage to, they tear the paper in half and again drop it while calling out a new player's name.





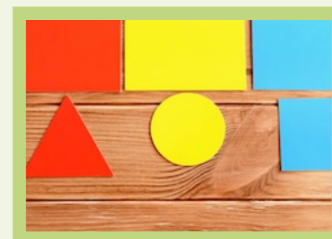
### **JAIL BREAK**

This game requires an open space as there is a lot of movement. Set up the chairs in pairs back to back (4 in a group) with two less chairs than players. Each player links arms with another player and they sit together side by side in a pair of chairs. Player pairs are numbered off, 1- however many groups of pairs. One group starts out as the caller (they will be standing) and calls two numbers other than their

own. If your paired number is called you must stand together and move to the vacant chairs. The objective is to race to the vacant chairs and sit before another pair all the while keeping your arms linked. Player pairs who are left standing are the next callers. If player pairs call out 'jail break!', every pair must get up and move.

### **MAKE THE SHAPE**

Music is played while the group mingles together, the facilitator intermittently pauses the music and calls out a 2D shape name. The task is for the group to create that shape as quickly as possible.



### **FRUIT SALAD (OR ONE OF THE MANY VARIATIONS)**

The group is seated in chairs in a circle. Each player will take 1 of 4 different fruit names. When the facilitator says a particular fruit name those players stand and move to a vacant chair. When the facilitator says 'fruit salad', everyone moves.

### **AIRPLANE BLITZ**



Bring a stack of copier paper and let the players make lots and lots of paper airplanes. Then you need some way to clearly divide the room in half. (The taller the divider the better.) A couch works, but even better is a rolling white board. Put half the players on each side of the divider. Put half the paper airplanes on each side of the divider. Explain that they can only throw ONE plane at a time and they must stop when the facilitator says “stop”. Say “Go”. They throw the airplanes over the divider as fast as they can. Planes are flying in both

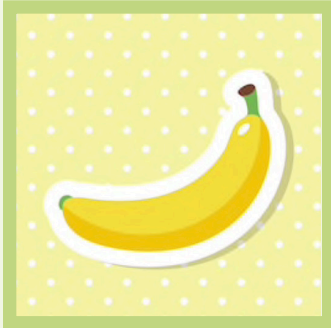
directions. The object of the game is to have the least number of airplanes on your side when ‘stop’ is called. Give them about 3 minutes. After a ten second warning call “stop”. Count the airplanes on each side of the divider. The team with the least number of planes wins.

### **SQUEEZE RACE**

Have the group sit in two lines facing each other. Now, have every other player turn out and then each player in the line will hold hands. The facilitator flips a coin. When the coin lands heads-up, the players at the front of both lines squeeze the hand they are holding, and each player squeezes the next until the squeeze reaches the end.

The person on the end then tries to grab a squeaky toy or other object before the other team. This is a race and should be competitive. The players at the front of the lines then move to the back of the line and so on and so forth.





### **BANANA TAG**

Divide the group up into two teams. Seat them in parallel lines across from each other. Make sure the 2 lines are about 2-3 metres apart. Put a banana (or other object) in the middle. Number the players off in each line so that there are two number 1's, two number 2's etc so you end up with something like this:

One line: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9...

Other line: 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1...

The same numbered people are diagonal from each other. The facilitator will call out a number. The two people with that number race to get the banana. The player who retrieves the banana first must get the banana back to his/her position without being tagged by the other player. Once one of the players picks up the banana the other player can tag him/her. If a player is tagged, the banana must be put down and another number called. Whoever tags earns a point for the team. Whoever gets to his/her seat without being tagged earns a point for his/her team.

A variation to this game is calling out two numbers. The players that come from the same line are on a team. This means that they can pass the banana back and forth trying not to get tagged.

### **PING PONG**

Form a circle standing up. Players decide upon a direction to follow (clockwise or counter-clockwise). Designate a player 1 who starts by saying any positive number which is not a multiple of 3 or 5. The next person mentally increments the number by one, then:

If the number is not a multiple of 3 or 5 they simply say the number but if the number is a multiple of 3 they must say 'ping' and clap (optional) and if the number is a multiple of 5 they must say 'pong' and jump (optional). Additional actions are optional and can be added to create further challenge to the game.







### **ZIP ZIP ZONK**

The group sits in a circle. Player one starts by saying the word “zip”. One person says it after another around the circle... zip, zip ,zip, zip etc.

Now tell the players that the aim is for no one to be able to see their teeth. They must cover them with their lips at all times. (pull them over your teeth as you would if you were rubbing in lipstick). Now go around the circle again saying zip. (It sounds more like zaip now!!)

Then explain to the players that they can change the direction that zip is going by saying zonk which makes it bounce back the other way.

A person is caught out if any player sees another’s teeth. The accuser must show this by shouting teeth teeth, bending their arm up so their hand touches their shoulder and slapping their elbow. AT ALL TIMES TEETH MUST BE COVERED. People who are caught out stand on one leg. When only 3 or 4 players are left have them stick out their tongues while keeping their teeth hidden. Keep playing the game. Eventually you should get a winner.

Variation - As the Zip hits you, you can point across the circle to a specific person and say “rara ‘someone’s name’”. The selected person may now restart the Zip in the direction of their choice. Next step: “Schwartz!” The recipient of a rara can reject it by holding their nose, turning their head and saying “Schwartz!” The Zoom then falls back to the pointer’s responsibility.

### **SMASHER**

The group sits in a circle on the floor with their legs extended out in front. One player stands in the middle with a loosely rolled newspaper, they are the smasher. The game begins when one seated player calls the name of another seated player. The smasher must try to hit the feet of the player whose name has been called before they call the name of another player. If the smasher hits a player before they manage to say someone else’s name, then they swap positions. After some time add the rule that if your name is called a further 3 times you can cross your legs and you are smash proof. This gradually brings the game to an end.





### **WAVES**

Sit the group in a circle of chairs leaving one chair empty. When the facilitator calls out 'left wave' players on the left of the empty chair move into it. If 'right wave' is called, then players on the right of the empty chair move into it. When the group has mastered this introduce 'hop wave'. The player who sits second left from the empty chair hops over the other player to sit in the empty chair and so on.

### **SIMON IN A BIND**

This game is a version of the old 'Simon Says' which is a copying game. Explain that this game is all about taking care of others. Players stand in a circle and link elbows with those on either side and must remain linked for the duration of the game. The facilitator (or take turns around the circle) gives instructions such as:

Lift elbows as high as they can go

Bend over as far as you can go

Scratch your ear

Scratch the person's ear next to you

Touch your nose

Walk around the circle to the right

Hop up and down

Squat down

Sit down



### **BUDDY UP**

Players stand in two circles, inside and outside circles, each player facing another player. Remember who your player buddy is. The inside circle walks/hops/jumps/skips/etc clockwise and the outside circle does the same anti-clockwise. When the facilitator says 'buddy up' players must find their buddy and face them in the circle, taking care of everyone else who is also trying to find their buddy.



### **BALLOON GAME**

Number the group off 1 – the number of players in the group. One by one in numerical order participants tap the balloon to keep it afloat. Variations – introduce 2 balloons; touch the balloon with head/feet only or with anything other than hands; odd/even numbers; ascending/descending.



### **RACING BALLS**

Players stand in a circle and number off 1, 2, 1, 2 etc around the circle. Two balls (netball, basketball) are required for this game. The balls are passed around the circle in opposite directions though only number 1's can pass their ball to other number 1's (over the number 2) and the number 2's do the same in the opposite direction. On 'go' see which team can get their ball back to the start position.

Variations – pass the ball behind the players backs

### **1, 2, 3, LOOK**

Players stand in a circle looking at the ground to begin. The facilitator says '1, 2, 3 Look'. Everyone immediately looks up and at another player, if you are both looking at each other you have to run around the circle and return to your position. Variation: run around like a duck, horse etc.; perform 5 push ups.



### **SCREAMER**

This is a variation of 1, 2, 3, Look. Players stand in a circle looking at the ground to begin. The facilitator says 'Look'. Players immediately look at someone else, if they are both looking at each other they scream. This is best done outside!

### **BALLOON UP**

Players sit on the floor in a tight circle with their feet extended in front. The facilitator places a blown-up balloon in the centre, players must keep the balloon aloft only using their feet. Add more than one balloon for a challenge or use non-dominant foot.



### **CLICK, CLACK**

Players sit in a circle. The facilitator begins by passing an object to their left saying, 'this is a click'. Player one on the left answers 'a what?'. The facilitator repeats 'a click'. Player one then passes the object to their left saying, 'this is a click'. Player two on the left answers 'a what?'. Player one turns back to the facilitator and asks, 'a what?', the facilitator says 'a click', player one says 'a click' back to player two on their left who then turns to their left (player three) and says 'this is a click' and the process continues, always coming back to the facilitator who repeats 'a click'.

When the group has mastered the process, the facilitator introduces another object to the right saying, 'this is a clack'. Player one on the right says 'a what', and so on and so forth.

### **NO SEE 'EMS**

Split the group into 2 teams and get them to huddle either side of a sheet/blanket that is non-transparent. Each team will silently nominate a player to approach the blanket which is held by two volunteers. The volunteers call '3, 2, 1' then drop the screen. Nominated players must call out the name of the player they see before their name is called. Those that do not call first move to the other team.





### **BEAT THE BUNNY**

The group is seated in a circle. The facilitator begins with the bunny (small ball or toy bunny) which is started first and is passed from player to player clockwise around the circle. When the bunny is about half way around, the facilitator introduces the farmer (large ball or soft toy) which is passed around in the same direction. The farmer needs to catch the bunny. The farmer can change directions to try and catch the bunny, but the bunny can't change direction until the farmer does.

### **SPLAT**

Players all stand in a circle, one player is nominated as “splatter” and stands in the middle. The player in the middle then randomly points at another player and shouts “Splat!”. The person they pointed at must duck, the two players either side of the one who ducked must “splat” each other, by pointing to the other and yelling, “Splat!”.

The last one to do so is out. This continues until there are only 2 active players left in the circle. When you are out, you sit down. Once only two players remain in the game they stand back to back western style, then the person who was in the middle counts from 1 - 8. With each number the 2 players take a step away from one another, and at any random point between 1 & 8 the counter shouts ‘splat’ instead of a number, at which point it's a quick draw for the players and the last one to point at their opponent and say splat is out leaving a winner.





### WINKS

Divide the group evenly into two new groups. Have one group form a circle and sit on the ground or in a chair. These are the “Winkers”. Have the other group sit or stand (if in a chair) behind the first group. These are the “Tappers.” They stand ready to tap the shoulders of the player in front of them. Tappers only move to tap shoulders, not to chase or run.

One “Winker” is chosen to start the game. This player begins the game by winking at any other “Winker” in the circle. The player who is winked at must try to switch spots with the 1st Winker without being tapped by their “Tapper”. If the player winked at successfully gets up without being tapped, they switch places with the first Tapper and start the next round. If they are tapped by their Tapper, they switch places with their Tapper. Once they switch places, the game begins again.

If you would like further information about professional development for your school or team in using circles or Restorative Practice, contact Kristy at

[kristy@restorativepathways.com.au](mailto:kristy@restorativepathways.com.au).

If you've already experienced the joy that is Kristy's circle training, then be sure to tell others about it and send them to Kristy by way of the website at [www.restorativepathways.com.au](http://www.restorativepathways.com.au).

**Thanks and enjoy!**

