

# **A Woman's Circle**

## **Create a peer mentoring group for advice, networking, support and connection**

by Maureen F. Fitzgerald, PhD

### **Preface**

*The circle process is a gentle invitation to change one's relationship to oneself, to the community, and to the wider universe. It offers an awakening of connection and purpose beyond the myriad of differences that keep people apart and in conflict with one another.—Carolyn Boyes-Watson*

You cannot possibly achieve all you want in your life on your own. Nor should you want to. But by simply gathering together a small group, you can not only solve your most basic day-to-day problems, but even change the world. Cecile Andrews, in her book *The Circle of Simplicity*, explains that circles are particularly important now because they are meeting so many fundamental unmet human needs:

the need to find your unique path, the need to feel part of a community, the need to be connected to the universe. In study circles you fulfill the human needs to feel connected—to feel valued, to feel accepted, to be appreciated for your authentic self, to feel that you are free to say what you want without fear of being judged, to talk with people who share your values, to talk about matters of importance and substance, to feel you are learning how to feel fully alive.<sup>1</sup>

### **My story**

Several years ago I began searching for a networking group of my own. I decided to join a few mastermind and networking groups to build my law practice and publishing business. Over time I became increasingly frustrated by their processes. None of these groups allowed enough time to get to know the other members, nor did the conversations go to the level necessary to get to the real issues. I felt that these brief conversations were somewhat superficial.

In my frustration, I decided to create my own networking group. In the process I read hundreds of books, articles and websites on various group and networking processes. These included mastermind

groups, dream teams, peer-mentoring groups and circles. I discovered *Wisdom Circles*, *Spirit Circles* and *Council Circles*, to name a few, and I learned about the ancient wisdom of circles. I decided to combine what I learned with what I knew about the *Corporate Circles* that I had been using for resolving conflict - to create a new model: *One Circle*.

At the same time, I was working with corporations and associations. I was hearing that there was a real desire for a deeper sense of connectedness and community. Many people were beginning to lose interest in their loose knit networking groups and book clubs and were finding that their community ties were strained. A growing body of people seem to be seeking ways to create trusting relationships and establish mechanisms for coming together to build community.

Over time, I have seen Circles not only solve problems and help people continuously learn, but also cause people to change deeply held perspectives. When people speak in Circles they transform their individual perspectives and create a new understanding—simply by sharing experiences.

Those who have experienced Circles know how it feels to be able to talk about things that are important and difficult. They know how it feels to find that one contact that made all the difference—that might have taken years to locate on their own. They know what it is like to feel supported in a highly competitive world.

### **What you will get out of this book**

In this book you will learn how to create your own Circle and how to keep it on track and resilient. By being a part of a Circle you will:

- create solutions and solve problems
- gain wise advice and information
- generate contacts and resources
- develop skills and continuously learn
- achieve goals and balance
- obtain support and connection

### **Whom this book is for**

Although this book as written for busy professionals who want to live more focused and balanced lives, this book is useful for anyone and specifically for the following:

*Entrepreneurs* who want to build their businesses attract clients and run their businesses more effectively and efficiently.

*Executives and business owners* who want to be more effective and efficient, excel in their leadership capacity and leave a legacy.

*Managers* who want to bring together people inside a corporation for purposes of mentoring, professional development and succession planning.

*Professionals* who want support and advice in achieving their personal and professional goals while living a more balanced life.

*Parents* who want to share parenting experiences (good and bad) and learn how to cope with, care for and relate to teenagers and aging parents.

*Career changers* who need contacts, advice and guidance in finding a career that best suits their skills and interests.

Most people recognize that they can be more successful with the help of others, yet many find it difficult to connect with others who will consistently challenge and support them.

### **Where to from here?**

If you are interested in joining or setting up a Circle, simply read on. You can either take the principles here and apply them to your current group or set up your own Circle. Pick a location, select a time, pull together a few people, and begin the conversation! It's that easy.

*We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking  
we used when we created them.—Albert Einstein*