

**Some things to consider when Building a Circle of Support or Friends**

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- What worries you or prevents you from asking people to participate in a Circle gathering?
  
- What is a time in your life when someone invited your support (or asked for your help)? What did they say or do that made it comfortable for you to get involved or to say "yes."
  
- Identify one or two people (friend or family member) who might support you in thinking about creating a Circle of Friends. This person might be a good listener, be creative, innovative, flexible. Maybe an out of box-thinker or a good support to your family or child.
  
- Identify some of the basic reasons you want to create a Circle. The reasons don't have to be big. Start simple, low key.
  
- As you think about creating a Circle or strengthening a current Circle for your son or daughter,
  - What concerns or worries do you have:
  
  - What excites you?

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- What are some of your son's or daughter's interests, gifts, preferences.
  
  - Who do you know that may have some similar interests? Or who do you know that might know of someone with those interests, skills or connections.
  
  - Brainstorm a few people who you might considering inviting to a first time gathering to talk about Circles.
  
  - If you were beginning to have a conversation about hosting a gathering what are some of the phrases or ways you might introduce the idea and the invitation.

**Sample invitation letters for Circle of Friends**

(Adapted from *Building Circles of Support and Friendship: A Guidebook for Parents* by Jan Burke-Gaffney.  
(Contact her at jan.bltn@gmail.com)

**Sample One**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

Sunday, April 15 from 2-5pm we wish to gather some friends and family together to talk about our son, Mark's future and explore what can be done now to help ensure that he's safe and happy in the coming years.

On this afternoon we would like to tap into the wisdom of a larger group of people who care about Mark. We welcome your ideas and energy.

We hope you can join us for this afternoon gathering of food, fun, and friendship.

P.S. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions. And if you can't join us, we would still like to get some of your thoughts.

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**Sample Two**

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

You are invited to join us to create a Circle of Friends and Support to explore ideas and dreams that will help our daughter Sally enjoy a life filled with friends, happy times, and purposeful activity in the community.

Our dreams for Sally are for her to be able to continue to live and participate in all her activities, engage in new activities and ensure she does not become isolated and lonely as she gets older. As parents, we are also getting older and worry about the day we will no longer be able to plan and advocate for Sally.

This is what has brought us to create a Circle for Sally. The Circle will help us build a social network with Sally. A second purpose of the Circle will be to create a type of safety net for the parents and siblings that can be called on in time of transition. We have learned that there are Circles created all over the world and that everyone benefits from being in a Circle.

We would love to have you join us to learn more about building this Circle.

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**Sample Three**

**An Invitation to Join My Circle**

"A friend is someone who smiles warm enough to melt your heart, arms open wide enough for big friendly hugs, and a heart big enough to care about others in a special way."

You have been an important part of my life for many years and your friendship means a great deal to me.

I would like to invite you to join my Circle of Support where you can help me think about my future and talk about how I could be more connected to other people.