

Cultivating Circles of Friends/Support More than a tool



**Janice Fialka, Emma Fialka-Feldman, Rich Feldman
with Guidance from Micah Fialka-Feldman**

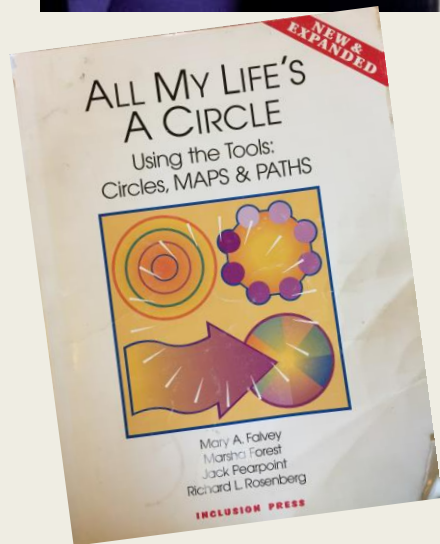
Honoring our pioneers of Circles



Jack Pearpoint
Marsha Forest



Judith Snow



Lynda Kahn & Jack Pearpoint

www.inclusion.com

We dance in a circle of gratitude and reciprocity.

Today's Agenda



HELP?

Micah's Circles Over the 30 Years

Why Circles Matter

The 5 "I"s of Circles (Principles)

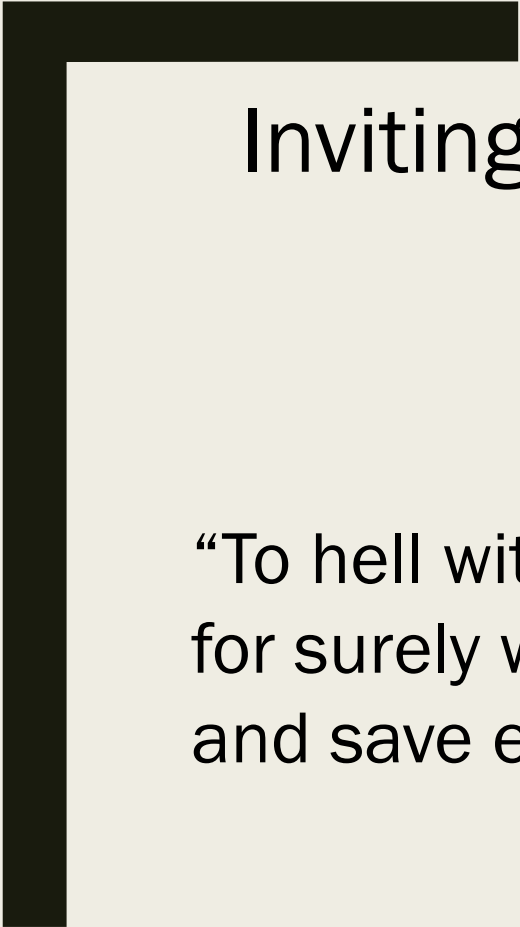
- Intentional, Invite, Interest, Interdependent, Impact on ALL, and Include a facilitator

Ways to cultivate, create and maintain Circles



Our intention for being together today:

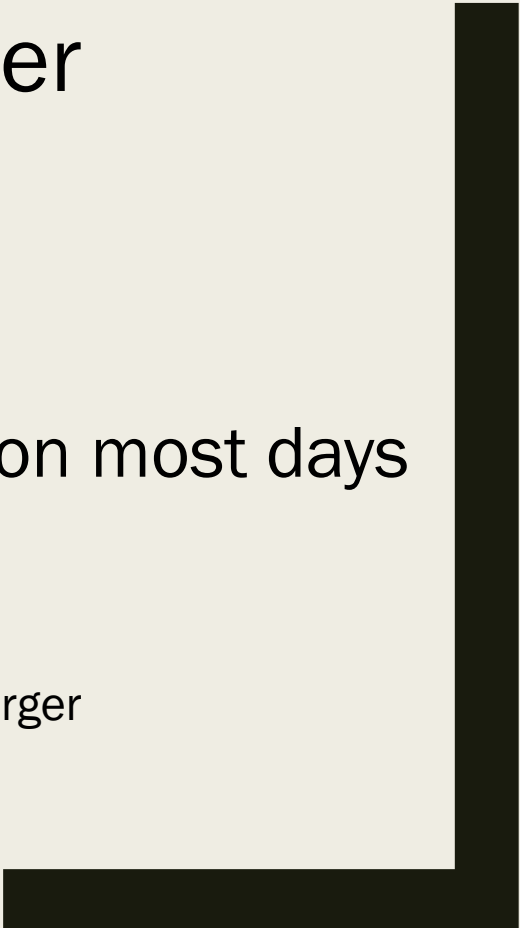
- Strengthen your interest or current work in cultivating Circles.
- Recognize one “next step” you will take.
- **“Fall in love” with the act of intentionally inviting support and asking for help.**



Inviting support/Asking for help is our superpower

“To hell with bootstraps,
for surely we need to swoop in on most days
and save each other.”

~L.R. Berger



**We are here to awaken from our illusion of
separateness.**

-Thích Nhất Hạnh

- Asking for help = builds connection/community.

Pause and Reflection



What makes it hard to
ask for help . . .
to engage others
or acknowledge a need/a
vulnerability?

Micah, Emma, Alyssa



Rich and Janice

A little bit about Micah's 39 year journey!

More and more labels

Mentally retarded

Cognitive impairment

Neurological disorder

Seizure disorder

Anxiety disorder

Heart aneurysm....

Best label:

Political junkie!



Micah in first grade



"I wanna go in
the same door
as my friends."

How the Circle Started:
No one knew HOW to do this.

Micah's Circle –
3rd Grade



Micah's Circle – High School





7.25 MARCH 19, 2004/ADAR 26, 5764

www.detroitjewishnews.com
DETROIT JEWISH NEWS

inside:
CELEBRATE!

JN
A Jewish Publication

NEW GUY ON CAMPUS
Special-needs student tastes college life in new inclusion program.

Planning a simcha?
Read Celebrate! in this issue!

The image shows the cover of the Detroit Jewish News magazine. It features a close-up photograph of the same young man from the main image, smiling broadly. The magazine title 'JN' is prominently displayed in the top right corner. Below the title, there is a small text box that reads 'inside: CELEBRATE!'. At the bottom of the cover, there is a headline 'NEW GUY ON CAMPUS' followed by a sub-headline 'Special-needs student tastes college life in new inclusion program.' In the bottom right corner, there is another small text box that says 'Planning a simcha? Read Celebrate! in this issue!'.



Syracuse University – School of Education



Micah's Circle in Syracuse



Watch the documentary:
Intelligent Lives on Amazon Prime

Small Group Conversation

6 minutes



What did you hear in Micah's story (or from your own experience) that is important to creating Circles and inviting support?

What is the role of asking for help? What does it take to invite others into our circle?

Why circles matter

- To Micah and the person seeking a Circle
- To Siblings and other family members
- To Parents/Caregivers
- To school settings

Why circles matter to Micah?

“I always tell parents who have young kids with disabilities, “Start a Circle of Friends.” I tell my adult friends with disabilities, “Start a Circle of Friends.”

In my Circle, we laugh a lot, eat pizza, and talk about things that I want to talk about. Sometimes they help me think about things that I haven't thought about.



Judith Snow

My Circle is one of the best things I have in my life.

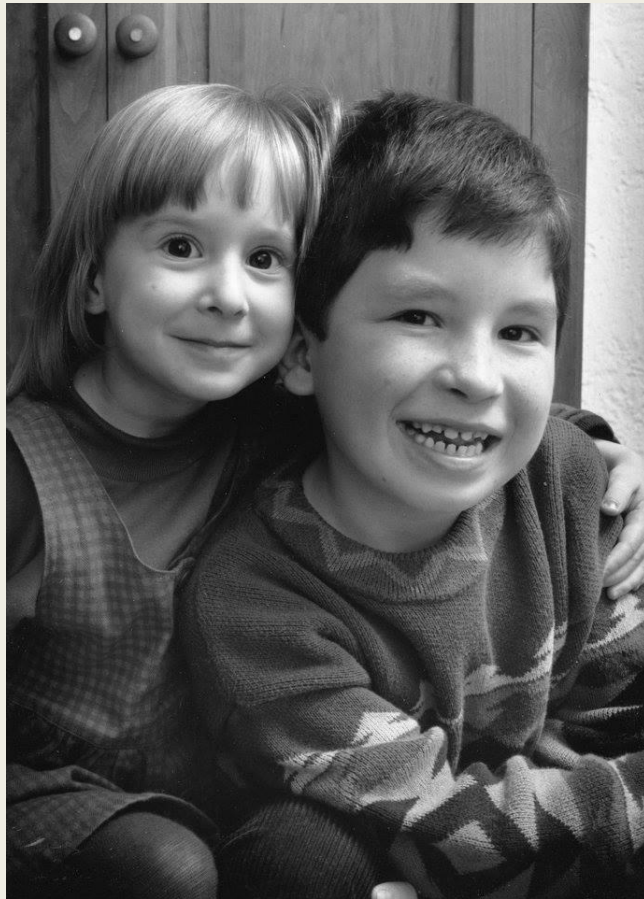


When I want to do new things, have fun, or need help or a ride, or want to try skiing, or yoga, or just want to hang out with my friends, **I know my Circle is there to plan with me or support me.**

Sometimes I have **to make important decisions**, like choosing a new roommate or thinking about my future goals. I'm more confident because I know I can talk it over with my Circle.

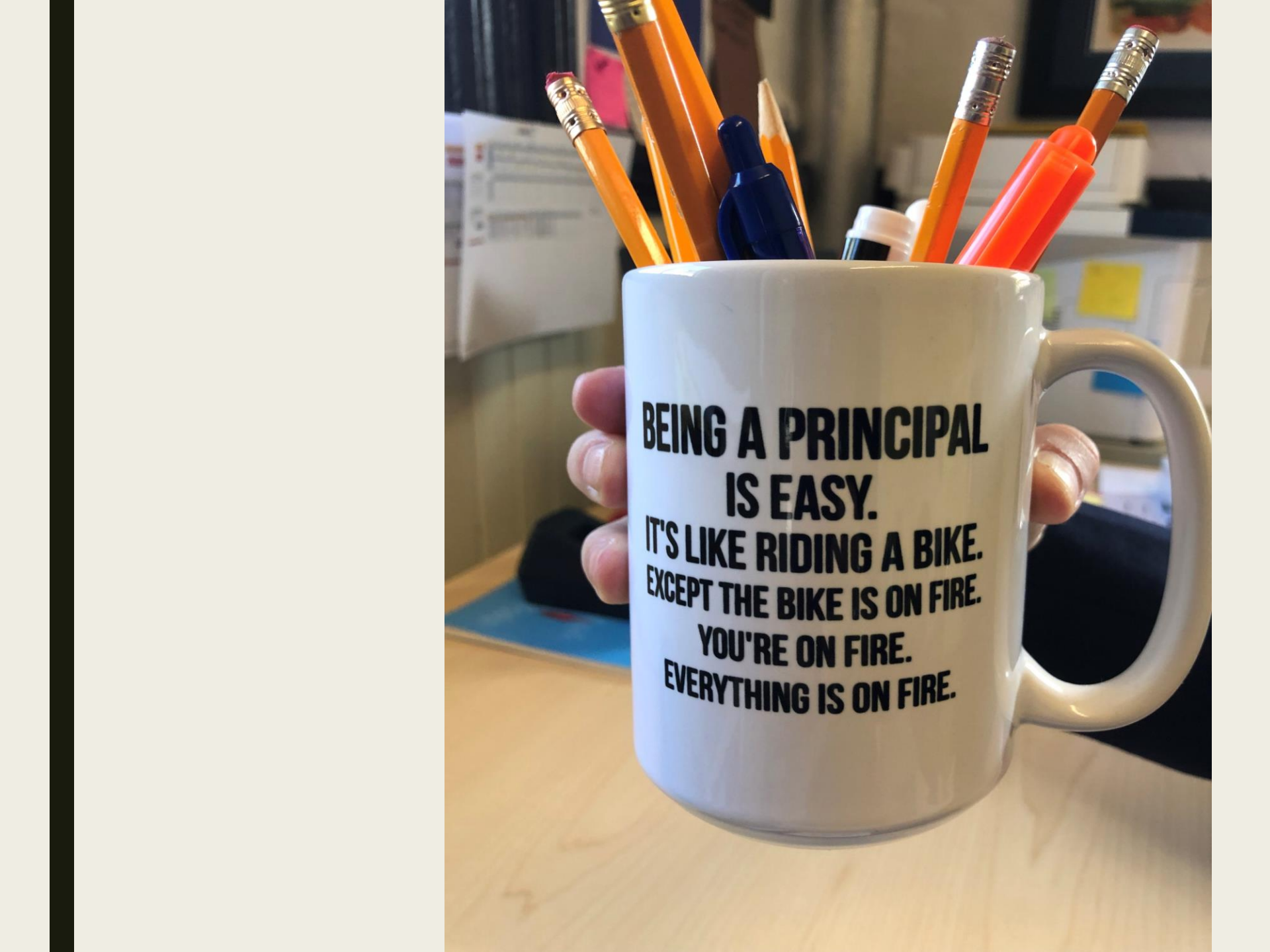
A couple of years ago, I wanted to start dating. I was excited and kind of scared. I talked it over with my Circle. They helped me do "practice dating." I got less scared and started dating.

Why circles matter to siblings?



I am not alone





**BEING A PRINCIPAL
IS EASY.
IT'S LIKE RIDING A BIKE.
EXCEPT THE BIKE IS ON FIRE.
YOU'RE ON FIRE.
EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE.**

Why circles matter to parents/caregivers?

Protector

Guide



It's not about letting go . . .

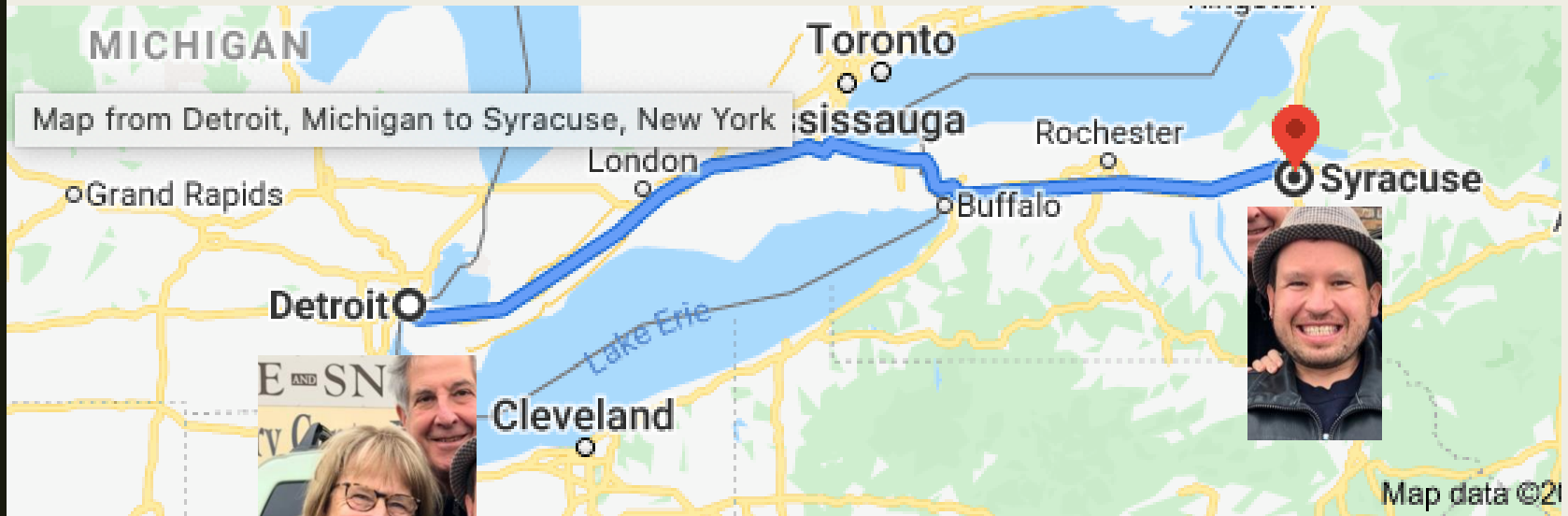


**It's about
learning how to
hold on
differently.**

Supported
Decision
Making



A story of strengthening Circle Connections



6 h 20 min (400.9 mi) via ON-401 E and I-90 E

DIRE





Why Circles Matter for School Settings

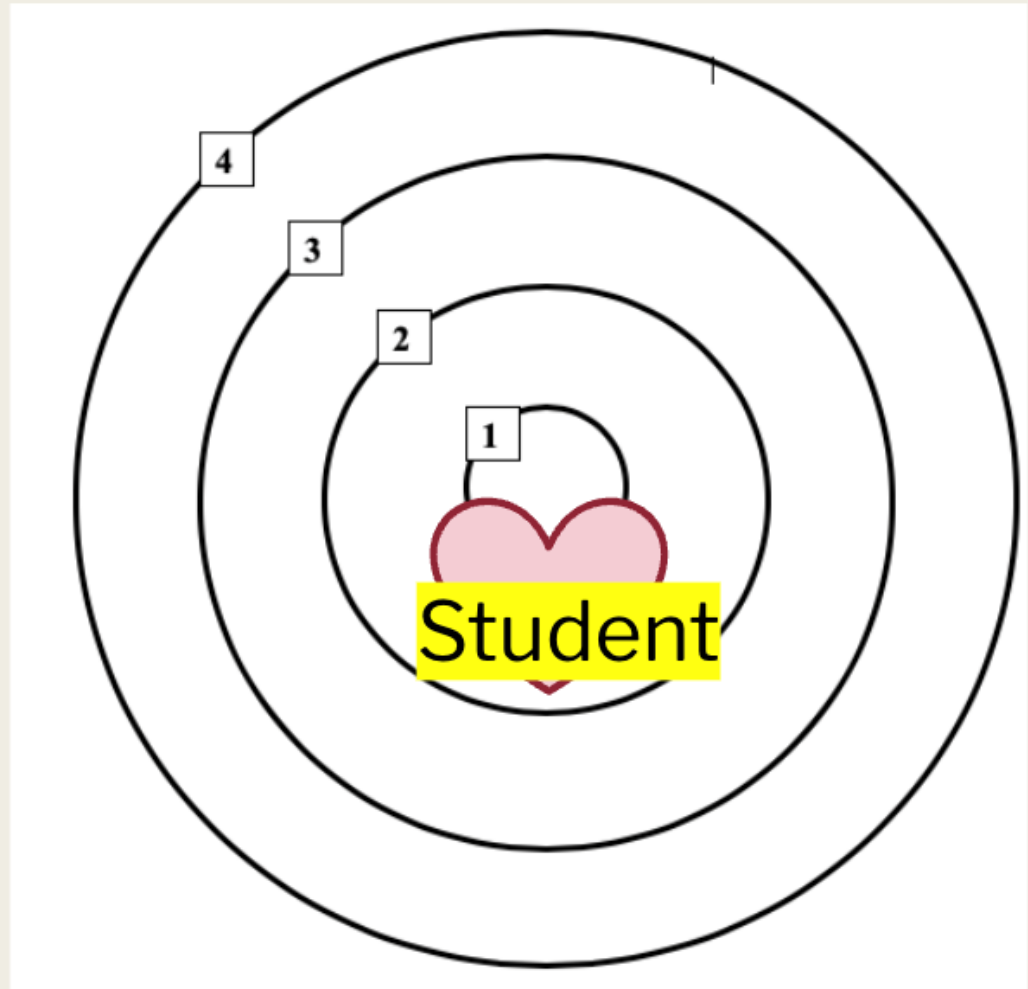


People In Our Lives

Circles of Participation

from *All My Life's A Circle: Using the Tools: Circles, Maps & PATH* by Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint, Rosenberg
(www.inclusion.com)

1. Intimacy (sister, mother, caregiver)
2. Friendship (friends & family)
3. Participation (organizations, networks, colleagues)
4. Exchange (teacher, doctor, OT, PT)



Second grade



Sample letter from a parent & a teacher about Circle of Friends

Dear Families in Room _____,
This letter is written to let you know a
offered for interested 1st and 2nd gra

**Break the silence.
Name the difference.**

I am the mother of Tyler. As you may _____ a student in your
child's class. Because of his unique learning needs, he receives
some specialized instruction each day in addition to being in Ms.
Emma's class.

Ms. Emma and I are writing to you because we are excited to see
"Circle of Friends" being used around _____
and need friends. Sometimes children with _____
disabilities benefit from having additional support or help to make
and maintain friends and peer relations. General education
students also often need some assistance in their efforts to
connect or interact with their peers who may have learning
differences.

Describe the Circle.

The "Circle of Friends" group is a _____
way to support opportunities to ha
engage a classmate who has some
from many families that these "circles" have benefited all children,
both with and without differences. There are many beautiful
stories of growth and discovery for everyone, including families.

**Name the FIRST
invitation.**

What is a Circle?



. . . a party with a purpose,
not a program

Or on Zoom



The 5 I's to Circles

- Intentional & Invitational
- Individual with disability
and their Interests
- Interdependent
- Impact on ALL
- Include a Facilitator



Intentional & Invitational



Most people won't come into a Circle if they are not invited.

Who can we invite?

*If school-based = classmates

*If more community-based

- Credit Union staff
- Bus driver
- Faith-based members
- Sports manager
- Shop keeper (comic store)

Individual with disability and their Interests

Building a Circle around the interests or growing interests of the person with the disability

The interests can be:

- hobbies,
- talents,
- sports,
- Politics/current events,
- spiritual or religious groups, or
- may be something totally new and unexpected.

Check list of a few ideas. Feel free to check what might work for you.

- ___ going to the movies
- ___ attending concerts
- ___ cooking/planning meals with Micah
- ___ helping with homework
- ___ being a part of his job searches/pla
- ___ exercising/jogging/weight lifting
- ___ helping with his speaking engage
- ___ computer technology training
- ___ transportation
- ___ arranging for volunteering activities
- ___ organizing his Circle of Support activiti
- ___ hanging out
- ___ talking on the phone or emailing Micah
- ___ Political work with the Democratic Party (Micah is clear about his political party!)
- ___ Jewish young adult activities or Synagogue
- ___ sports activities
- ___ not sure what I want to do, but I would like to participate in some way _____

Sample checklist used to invite members of community and honor passions/interests of individual

Your name:

Emails:

Phone:

Interdependent & Impact on ALL

Build a Circle (and grow the Circle) by recognizing the various ways people can contribute.



Include a Facilitator

School staff

Consultant

Service Coordinator

- Assist with planning
- Keeps focus on person
- Creates comfortable and safe environment
- Ensures participation of all, especially person

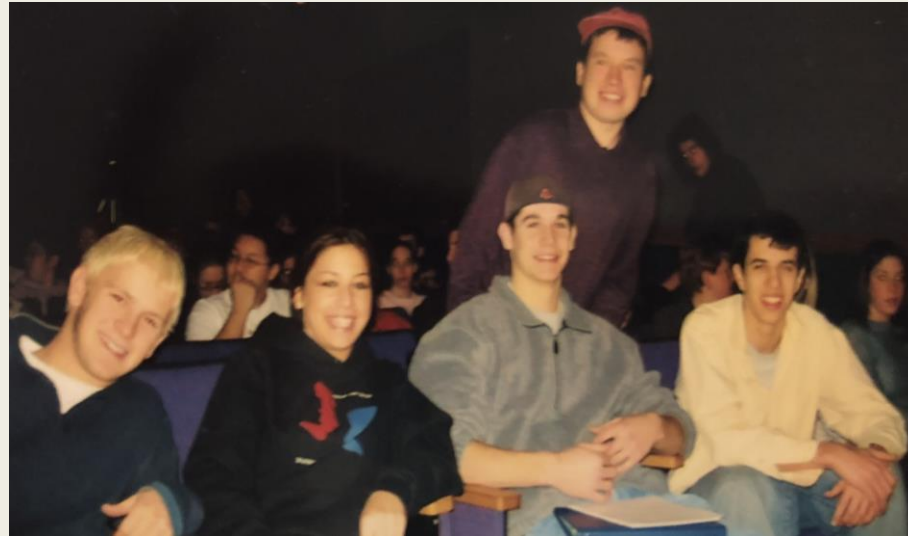


Reflection for Small Groups



- What NEXT step or steps might you make?
- Having listened to this talk about Circles, what is one of your strong “take aways?”

A few final thoughts about Creating and Maintaining Circles



Any age (!) is a
great time to start!



Creating & Maintaining Circles


- Seek out someone to talk to/explore
- **Make a list** of potential people
 - *Think outside the box*
- Create invitations, a letter, a text message
- Plan a gathering & host regular check-ins
- Keep focus-person at the center & engaged



Creating & Maintaining Circles

- Value different types of participating

MFF TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2020

HAPPENED	SEEN/OBSERVED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I had some good talks with people • Soon I will be at a healthy weight • I talked to my health coach over FB chat. • I thought about how later in the summer I will look for a service dog • I've been doing well not watching any TV or news • I'm excited to see my parents on Sunday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dogs & people • I saw my scale yesterday when I checked my weight • I saw my roommate. I see him every day • I saw a friend who lives across the street from me. We took a walk 6 feet apart. • I saw you yesterday (Rebecca)
HEARD / EAVESDROPPED	IMAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I listened to folk music • I hear the si • I hear music a lot • I hear when I talk on the phone 	<p>Micah wants a dog that's calm & relaxing</p> 



Yoga class

Driving

6-minute journal

Creating & Maintaining Circles

- Take risks
- Ask for help
- Nudge
- Celebrate
- Reflect



- I want to live in a world where help is asked for and given freely, without guilt, pity or scorekeeping. But with a generosity of spirit that comes with the knowledge that we need each other --- that no one of us is really on our own.
- I want to live in a world where we learn and relearn to ask for help without apology ---but with dignity and grace.

Last Story

Inclusion is Belonging

