

Closing Circle

Closing Circle can be used as a tool for sharing or debriefing a single activity, but more usually to *bring closure to the entire camp session*. It is a journal exercise that is great for groups who don't have much experience using journals. It can be done as a single activity or repeated many times. It's important to let participants know how you will be using Closing Circle. I usually tell the group that the circle is private, that it will not be collected, but that everyone will be expected to share something. On the other hand, you may decide to use it with staff as a program evaluation tool; in which case you will want to have copies from everyone. Whatever the case, let everyone know what you are planning to do before they begin writing. Here's how it works:

In groups of from 8 to 12, distribute one Circle to each participant. Describe or frame what the group discussion is about. "I want to spend some time talking about the canoeing trip," or "This is a way for us to talk about the whole summer." Ask participants to label each wedge. Wedges represent categories of feelings, experiences, emotions and act as "markers" for an experience. The Circle helps participants remember, reflect and record their experiences and accompanying emotions.

Suggested categories include:

- Something that surprised me about myself
- Something I accomplished
- A high point
- A low point
- A gift I received from the group
- A gift I gave an individual (or the group)
- A moment when I learned a new lesson about friendship
- Something I learned about myself
- A moment when our group felt the closest

In the center of the Circle, ask participants to draw a symbol that represents the experience for them. Once participants are writing, filling in the circle should take between 15-20 minutes.

When the group is finished, join in a circle and share. The group focus seems better if you ask each person to share one wedge from their circle and continue around until everyone is finished. Sharing more than one thing is optional. Generally participants love to share and are happy to share everything they've written.

Depending upon how much time is allocated for sharing, with a group of twelve, this activity should take about one hour. If the group is larger than twelve, the activity will take longer.

Variations:

Add your own categories! The purpose of this activity is to reflect on experience and share them with group members. Add your own categories, but be aware that categories will affect the tone of the conversation. If you want a serious tone, stay away from a category like 'Silliest Moment.'

Instead of using a circle, change the shape to fit a theme. Use a tent shape if you've been on a camping experience. Or use a boat shape if you've been sailing.

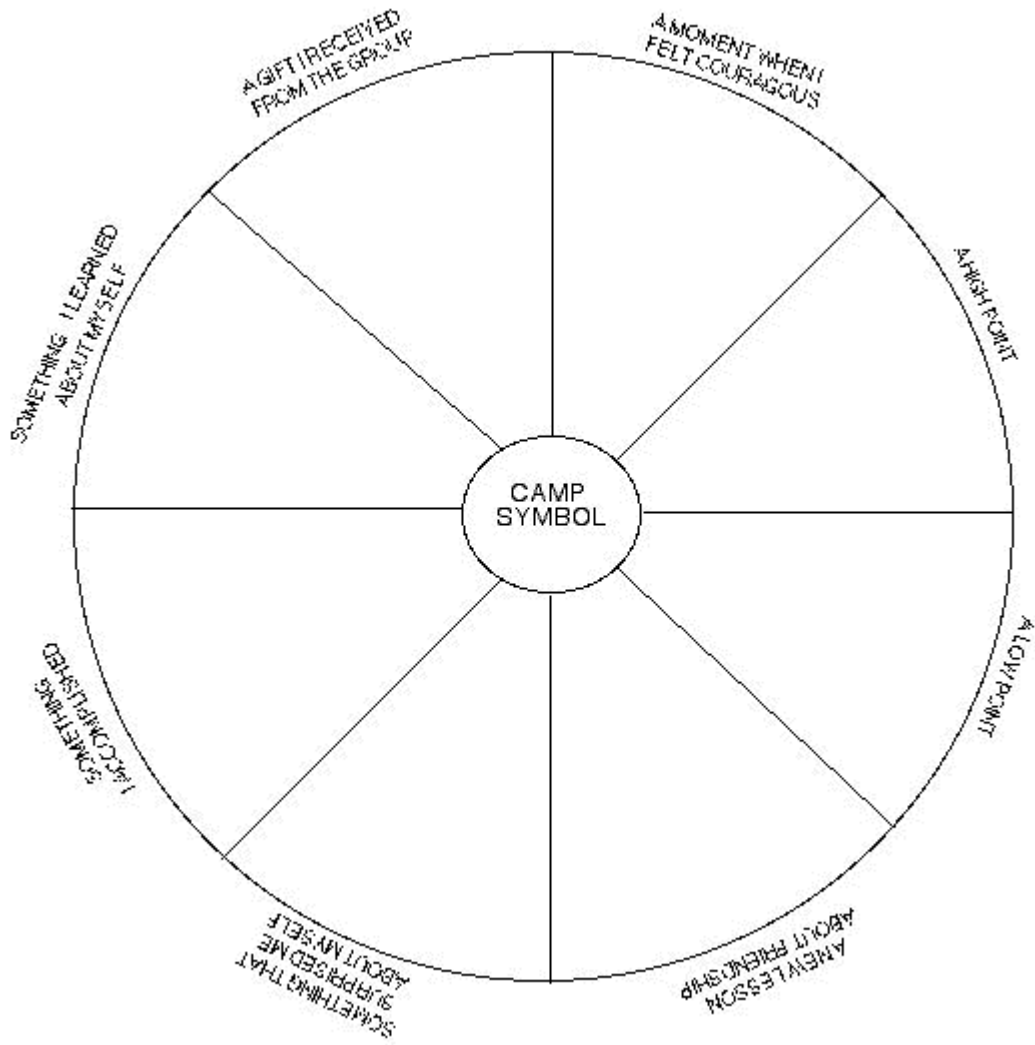
Leave a wedge blank and invite participants to fill in their own category.

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