

Coaching for Character, October 24, 2019

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Focus Area 3: A Climate of Growth

Brief description: A coach focuses on relationships (with the learner and among learners) and creating routines and norms that promote growth. Guidance is provided in a caring way and learners understand that growth requires ongoing effort and patience. The team supports its members and helps promote learning. Learners know that their experience and emotions matter. A “sharing circle” can be a helpful tool. A positive climate nurtures competencies such as listening with kavod; at the same time, listening with kavod (and other competencies) helps build a positive climate.

Activities	
Each Table: Sharing Circle activity	10 mins
At tables...	
<p><u>Discussion 1: At your tables:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Read the brief description above, then discuss:</i> What helps you feel more connected to others when you are with a group? How do the sort of activities such as the one we just did help to build a sense of community in your work? How does this relate to the idea of kavod in general, and listening with kavod more specifically? 	10 mins
<p><u>Think-Pair-Share</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Think to yourself about one or both of these questions:</i> <p>In your work, what opportunities exist for learners to deepen their relationships and get to know one another? What additional opportunities might be possible? [Also consider: How does the physical space contribute to this? To what extent are there norms or rituals that help enhance community (for example, how learners transition into/out of the learning environment, what you celebrate and honor?)]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a partner, share and discuss your thoughts. • With whole table: Share 1-2 ideas per pair about opportunities to build a positive climate for growth and learning. (“Scribe” please write these down.) 	<p><u>15 mins total</u> Think: 2 mins Pair: 6 mins Share: 7 mins</p>
<p><u>Journaling:</u> “Free write” or use this prompt: How might I enhance my work in the area of creating a positive emotional and relational climate?</p>	5 mins

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Sharing Circles

Many of you will be familiar with some form of “circle time” or “class meeting.” We’ll use the term “Sharing Circle” in our discussion, while recognizing that this goes by many names

Structure. Sharing Circles can take many forms, physically. As the name suggests, a circle is the preferred format, allowing learners to speak to the group and not to the back of the head of the person in front of them.

- Think of the Sharing Circle as a ritual. It is something that is done regularly, not only “as needed.” Some teachers use it as a transition ritual, marking the beginning and/or end of the day, or a return from lunch or recess.
- A “Speaker Power” object (a wand or stuffed animal) can be a helpful tool in concretizing the notion that one person (the holder of the Speaker Power) speaks at a time.
- It can also be helpful to establish non-verbal signals for used in Sharing Circles (and throughout the day!). For example, patting one’s chest as a sign of agreement.

Function. What is shared in a sharing circle? What is this venue used for?

As a transition ritual, the “content” can be something as basic as asking learners to greet a fellow learner by name. Some educators ask learners to share news about themselves or check in about how they are feeling. We’ve seen educators start each session by asking each learner to dedicate their learning for the day to someone or something.

The Sharing Circle can also be a space to discuss group norms and expectations, and to reflect on how the group is doing in upholding these and what changes may be needed. It can be a venue for introducing and practicing skills. As the Sharing Circle becomes a part of the routine, it can be called on as a format for difficult conversations.

Sharing Circles are also opportunities for community building, for learners to get to know one another. This can be done through posing questions that allow for learners to use their imaginations while also sharing an element of themselves:

- If you could have any superpower, what would you pick and why?
- If you could be any animal for one day, what would you pick and why?

Getting to know one another can also take place in a way that is linked to content:

- If you could spend the day with one of the Avot or Imahot, who would you pick. Why?
- If you could write an “11th commandment” what would it be?
- What are some feelings that you have when you hear a shofar blowing?
- Which part of building the sukkah did you find most exciting and why?