

Youth Guide to Violence Prevention



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Youth Guide to Stopping Gun Violence

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Introduction

You have **power**! Most people do not know the power that they possess, but they definitely have power. The power that we have is the power to decide! The average adult makes around 35,000 decisions a day. The average young person makes 3,000 decisions a day.

Decisions are always necessary to make. The number of decisions increases the older that we get. Simply put, you get more opportunities to exercise your power to decide as you get older. The decisions are often hard because there is sometimes pressure to make the wrong decisions all around us. The decisions you make under pressure will help to determine the outcome of your life, either positively or negatively.



Core Values are the heartbeat to your “WHY.”

Let’s keep it real—violence affects all of us. Whether it’s something you’ve seen up close, heard about, or even lost someone to, it leaves a mark. But here’s the thing: You have the power to help stop it. This guide is for YOU, to show how you can make your community safer, one step at a time. We’ll be using two game-changing ideas: Restorative Practices (RP) and Cognitive Behavioral Techniques (CBT) to help you handle emotions, solve conflicts, and make sure everyone feels respected.

- **Restorative Practices (RP) are all about fixing what’s broken in a way that heals everyone, not just punishing people.**

- **Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT)** Imagine you text your friend, and they don’t respond right away. You might think, “They must be mad at me.” This thought makes you feel anxious and upset. Because of this, you start ignoring your friend or acting distant the next time you see ‘

Terms to Remember



Restorative Practices

Fixing the problem in a way that heals everyone.



Cognitive Behavior Theory

Checking your thoughts before jumping to conclusions

Now, let’s break it down using CBT through a restorative lense:

- Thought: “They must be mad at me.”
- Feeling: You feel anxious and upset.
- Behavior: You start ignoring them or acting distant.

CBT would help you pause and ask, “Is my thought true?” Maybe your friend is just busy or didn’t see your message. By changing your thought to, “They might be busy, I’ll wait,” you’ll feel less anxious and won’t act distant or upset the next time you see them.

CBT is about checking your thoughts before jumping to conclusions. This helps you avoid unnecessary stress and prevents actions that might make things worse. You don’t need to be an expert to practice it—just learn to pause, reflect, and think differently!

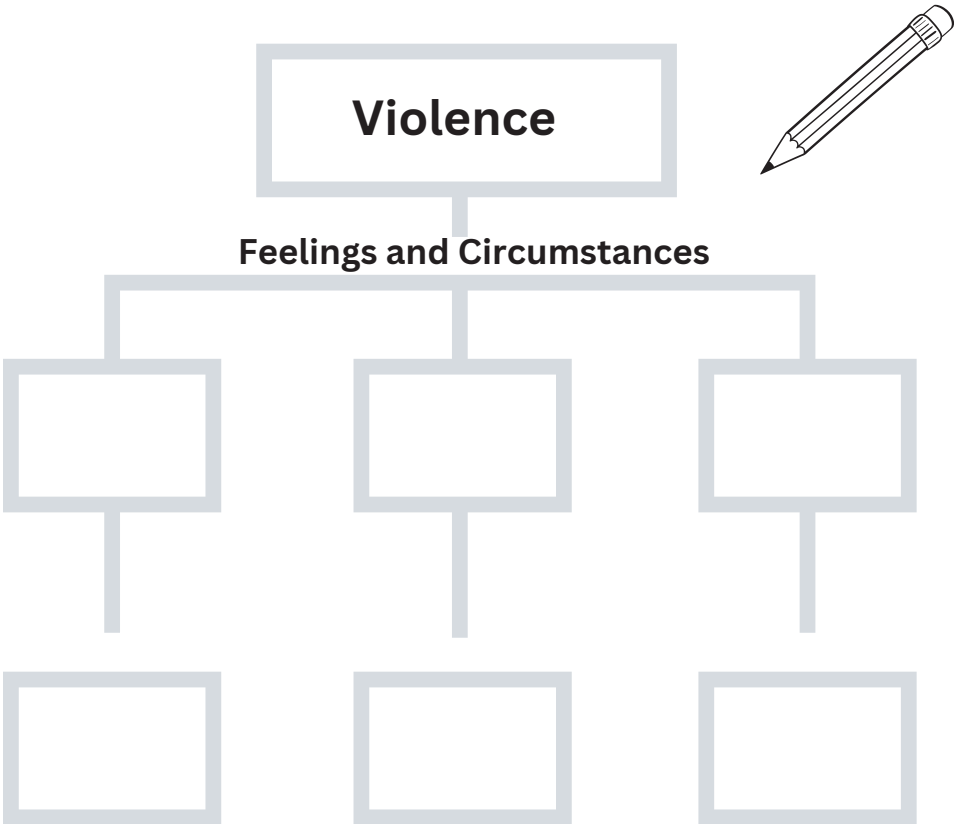
**Reflect on a time you have had a thought process like this.
Use the lines below. (reference pages 25-29)**



Chapter 1: Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Violence doesn't just happen out of nowhere—it usually starts because of something deeper, like anger, jealousy, or disrespect. But here's the deal: just because you're mad doesn't mean things have to end in violence. Learning how to deal with tough emotions is key to keeping things from getting worse.

Let's reflect on these deeper things.
What are some other feelings or circumstances that can cause violence? Use the chart below.



Where Restorative Practices come in...

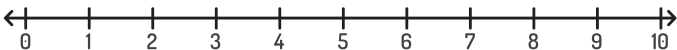
How RP Can Help You Handle Drama:

- Restorative Circles: Think of this as a safe space where everyone involved in a beef can sit down and talk about how they feel, and how to fix it.
- Peer Mediation: Sometimes, it's easier to talk things out with someone your own age. This is where you and other students can help each other solve problems, instead of letting things turn violent.

On a scale from 1 to 10. 10 being the highest. How helpful would a restorative circle be to you?



How helpful would peer mediation be to you?



Why did you rate these tools this way?

CBT Hacks for Controlling Anger:

- **Pause & Breathe:** When you’re heated, don’t react right away. Take a few deep breaths to calm down.
- **Flip the Script:** Instead of thinking “I gotta get even,” try flipping that thought into “There’s a better way to handle this.”
- **Think Long-Term:** Ask yourself, “How will this situation affect me a month from now if I act out?”

Look at the images below. Which CBT hack would work best in each situation? Write you answer on the line.







Action Step for This Week:

Start a Conflict Resolution Circle at school. Talk to a teacher or counselor who can help you and your friends create a chill space where people can talk through problems before they get worse

Let's make a plan.

Who can help?

Where can we meet?

What is the outcome
we are looking for?

PLAN

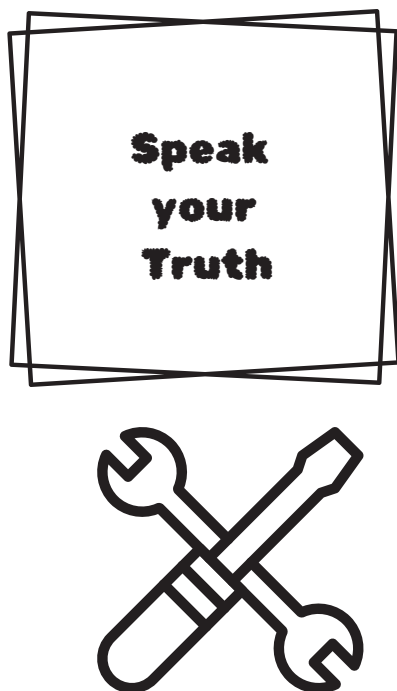
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Chapter 2: Dealing with Unfairness in Your Community

We know life can be unfair, especially in Black and Brown communities. It can feel like the system is stacked against you, and that can build up frustration. But the truth is, we can take those feelings and use them to make things better, not worse. Restorative Practices helps you call out injustice and work together to fix it.

RP for Fighting Unfairness:

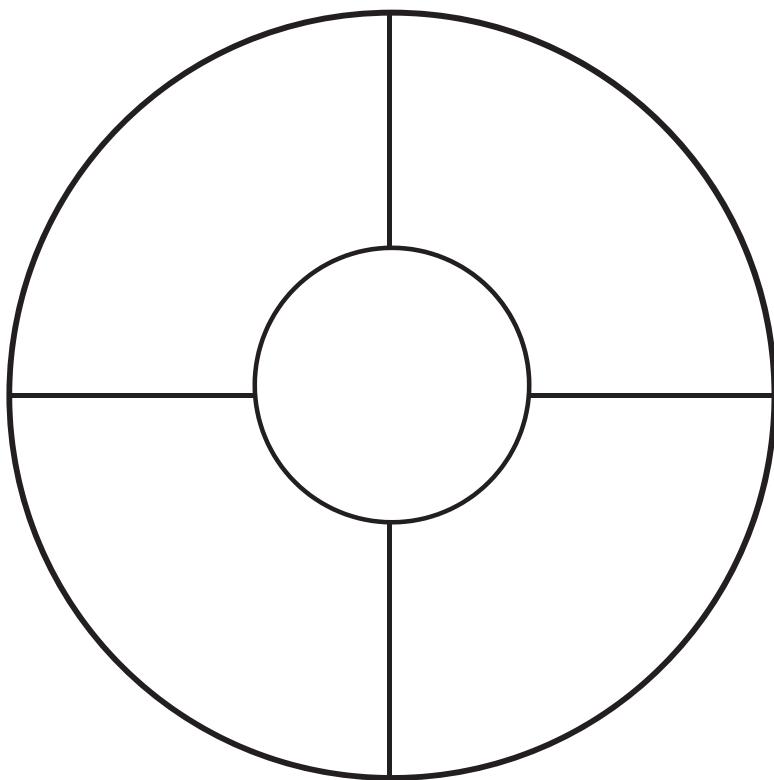
- **Speak Your Truth:** Restorative circles give people a voice. If you or someone you know feels like they've been disrespected or treated unfairly, this is a space to say it.
- **Fix the Damage:** When people mess up—whether it's bullying, racism, or exclusion—they can learn how their actions hurt others and make it right.



CBT for Changing the Way You Think:

- Catch Negative Thoughts: If you're thinking, "No one cares about people like me," stop and ask yourself if that's really true. Challenge those negative thoughts.

Think of a negative thought you have at times.
Write it in the middle of the circle. Then write 4
truths that remind you that the negative thought
was not true.



Flip the Negative: Change “This system is against me” into “I have the power to overcome this, and I’ll find ways to make things better.”

Think of thoughts you could easily flip to the positive. Write them below.

A diagram consisting of four empty rounded rectangular boxes arranged in a 2x2 grid. Arrows indicate a clockwise flow: from the top-left box to the bottom-left box, from the bottom-left box to the bottom-right box, from the bottom-right box to the top-right box, and from the top-right box back to the top-left box.



Action Step for This Week:

Start a Respect Circle at school. Get together with friends and teachers to talk about how you can make sure everyone feels included and respected, no matter what.

Check for Understanding:

Match the letter with the correct sentence.

RP is an abbreviation for_____.

CBT is an abbreviation for_____.

Restorative Circles are _____.

Catching negative thoughts_____.

Peer Mediation is _____.

Pause and breath technique helps you _____.

Answer Bank:

- a.safe space where everyone can talk about issues
- b.Restorative Practices
- c. Cognitive Behavior Theory
- d. to slow down so you can react in the right way
- e.talking to someone your age
- f. asking yourself if the thought is true

Chapter 3: Building Real Friendships That Last

Here’s something you already know—strong friendships can keep you grounded. When you have people in your corner who have your back, it’s easier to make smart choices and avoid bad situations. Restorative Practices can help you build and fix relationships that matter.

How RP Can Strengthen Your Crew:

- **Apologize and Heal:** If you’ve hurt someone close to you, RP let you apologize and make things right, so the friendship can grow stronger.
- **Support Circles:** Sometimes life gets tough, and it’s cool to have a space where you and your friends can talk about what’s stressing you out without judgment.

Think about your support circle. Do they allow you the space you need? If not how could you ask for space?



CBT for Stronger Friendships:

- **Stop Overthinking:** If you're thinking, "My friend's mad at me," stop and check if that's really true. Sometimes, it's not about you—they might just be having a rough day.
- **Put Yourself in Their Shoes:** If you're having beef with someone, take a second to think about how they're feeling, too. It helps you respond with empathy.

**Read the Scenario. Use the tool of putting yourself in other shoes to explain how you would feel.
Discuss with others near you.**

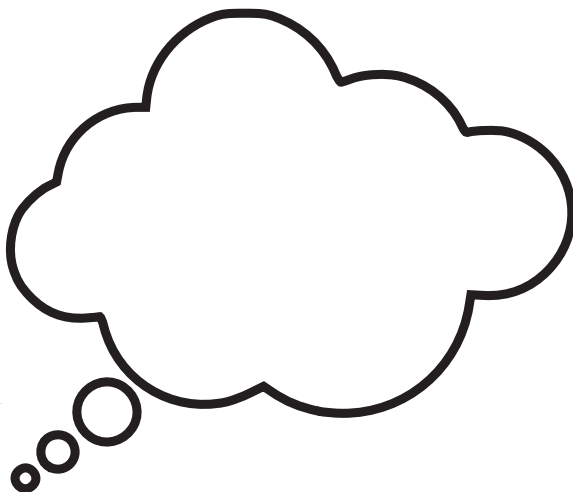
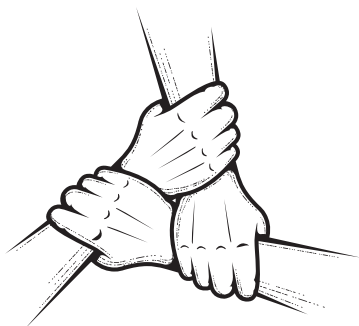
You're a high school student and there's a lot of social tension at school. Rumors spread easily, and groups of friends often pick on those they see as "different." You're in the hallway when you notice two students: Jake, who's known for making others laugh by mocking others, and Sam, who's been the target of Jake's bullying for weeks now. Sam is quieter, more reserved, and has been trying to avoid Jake, but lately, things have escalated. Jake has been calling Sam names, pushing him in the halls, and even spreading rumors about him online.



Action Step for This Week:

Start a Support Circle with your friends. Find a teacher or counselor who can help organize a weekly meet-up where you can all talk about stress, problems, or anything on your minds.

What are two things that stood out to you from this chapter? Write them below.



Chapter 4: Handling Stress and Emotions Without Losing It

We all get stressed, angry, or overwhelmed. But how we deal with those emotions is what matters. If you don't have the tools to handle stress, it can lead to bad decisions. Luckily, CBT gives you simple ways to manage your feelings so things don't blow up.

CBT Tools to Keep Calm:

- **Breathe It Out:** When you feel like you're about to snap, take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly let it out through your mouth.
- **Find Your Calm Place:** When things get crazy, close your eyes and imagine a peaceful place—like a park, a beach, or anywhere that makes you feel safe.
- **Talk Back to Negative Thoughts:** When you think, "I can't deal with this," challenge that with, "I've handled tough stuff before, I can do it again."

**List three things
you need in a calm place.**



1	•	
2	•	
3	•	

RP for Healing:

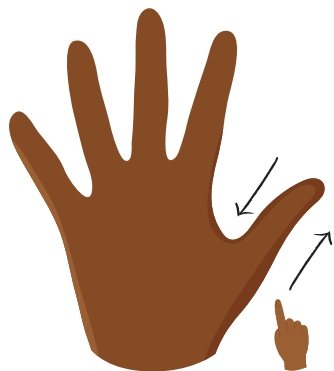
- Talking Circles for Healing: After a fight or conflict, RP lets everyone involved express their feelings and work on healing together.

Action Step for This Week:

Practice Deep Breathing every day when you feel stressed. Take 5 minutes each day to slow down and breathe deeply. Notice how it changes how you feel.

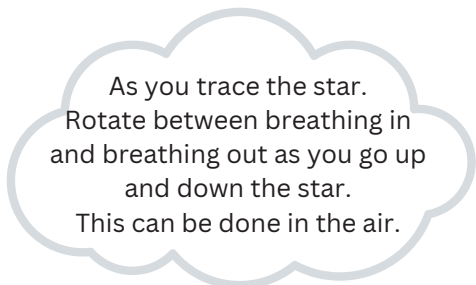
Below are breathing techniques. Try one. Which one do you think will help you to feel better in times of stress?

Five Finger Breathing



As you trace up each finger
breathe in. Pause at the top.
As you trace down breath out.
Pause at the bottom.

Star Breathing



As you trace the star.
Rotate between breathing in
and breathing out as you go up
and down the star.
This can be done in the air.

Chapter 5: Stepping Up as a Leader for Change

You don't have to wait until you're older to make a difference. You can be a leader now. By using Restorative Practices and CBT, you can set an example for your school and community. You can show people a new way to deal with problems that doesn't involve violence.

How to Lead with RP:

- Lead Circles: Organize talking circles at school to help your classmates solve conflicts peacefully.
- Be a Role Model: Show people what it looks like to own up to mistakes and fix them. Be the one who helps instead of hurting.

Who can you be a role model to?		How can you be a role model to them?	
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How to Lead with CBT:

- **Teach Others:** Share with your friends how using positive thinking, breathing techniques, and calming strategies help you stay in control.
- **Model Positive Conflict Resolution:** When things get tense, show your friends and peers how to stay calm and solve problems without fighting.

Action Step for This Week:

Plan a Restorative Practices Event at school. Work with your teachers and classmates to organize a circle or assembly to teach others how RP and CBT can make your school safer.

Brainstorm some ideas of how you could plan an event for Restorative Practices.



Conclusion: You’ve Got the Power

You hold the key to making your school and community a better, safer place. By using what you’ve learned about Restorative Practices and CBT, you can stop violence before it starts, build real friendships, and help others do the same.



How confident do you feel that you hold the power to create a safer community? Why do you feel this way?

Reflection Questions



Think about the following:

- What’s the most important thing you’ve learned about preventing violence?

- How can Restorative Practices make your school feel safer?

- How can you use CBT to help you deal with stress or anger?



Final Thought:

When you learn to pause and question your thoughts, you're less likely to react impulsively. This can stop conflicts from getting out of hand, whether it's through verbal escalation or even physical violence. Peer leaders can help teach others to think before reacting, showing how controlling your thoughts can prevent bad decisions, like carrying a weapon or engaging in violence. Changing your mindset can change the outcome.



Instructions for Facilitating Circles:

Circle Space:

Arrange desks in a circle to promote inclusivity and visibility. If space allows, consider moving outdoors.

If a physical circle isn't possible, you can still run the process by starting at one side of the room and passing the talking piece around, ensuring everyone has a chance to share.

Facilitation Steps according to circle outline:

1. Check-In:

Begin by checking in with participants. The facilitator can ask a simple, open question like, scale 1-10 “How are you feeling today?” or “What’s one thing on your mind?” This sets the tone and encourages participation. Check-ins are an essential way to begin your circle, as they help you gauge how your students are feeling. This is a chance to identify any students who may need extra support.

After the circle, you can follow up with those students privately to ask about their needs. If you're unable to provide the necessary support, you can seek additional help for them.



2. Purpose of the Circle:

The facilitator introduces the purpose of the circle, clearly stating the goal or the reason for gathering. For example, “Today, we are here to talk about building values in our classroom.”

3. Identify Talking Piece and Centerpiece:

Introduce the talking piece, which is an object that represents respect and signals whose turn it is to speak. Only the person holding the piece speaks, while others listen.

Place a centerpiece (optional) in the middle of the circle or use dry erase board, symbolizing a shared focus or intention. This could be an object related to the theme or purpose of the circle.

4. Icebreaker:

Use a fun or lighthearted question to warm up the group. For example, “If you could have any superpower, what would it be?” This helps ease participants into the process and builds comfort in sharing.

5. Values:

Together, create a list of community values. Ask participants how they would like to be treated in the circle and what behaviors are important to them. This list will serve as the group’s guiding principles and will become your community values, posted in the room for easy reference and to guide behavior moving forward.

Materials:

For the values to be displayed you would need paper and pens to record their values. You can use paper plates, index cards, construction paper, etc. This so that the values are visible for everyone to see and to keep record of for each class.

Body of the Circle (Core Discussion):

Create questions that relate to the circle's purpose. For example, "What does trust look like to you?" or "How can we support each other better in this space?" The facilitator should go first to set the tone, modeling openness and respect for the process.

6. Closing:

End the circle with a reflection or closing question such as, "What's one thing you're taking away from today's discussion?" or "How do you feel after participating in the circle?" End with a poem, quote. By following these steps, the facilitator creates a respectful and intentional space for everyone to share, learn, and connect.



Circle Outline & Prep Sheet

- Community-Building Circles -

1. Welcome (greeting, Check-in)

Check-in:

(Scale 1-10)

2. Share the purpose of the circle & basic expectations (i.e. confidentiality, cell phone use, etc):

3. Explain Center and Use of Talking Pieces:

4. Icebreaker:

5. Create Values:

6. Question Rounds (Opportunities to build relationships through story-telling, experiences, discussion topics): Refer to the value you picked to answer each question.

7. Closing Ceremony (reading, music, spoken word, song, meditation, drumming, etc):

Circle Outline & Prep Sheet

Help Circle –

1. Welcome (greeting, Check-in)

Check-in:

(Scale 1-10)

2. Share the purpose of the circle & basic expectations (i.e. confidentiality, cell phone use, etc):

The purpose of this circle is to discuss that everyone needs help from others.

3. Explain Center and Use of Talking Pieces:

The talking piece is used to determine who has the right to speak. Whoever has the talking piece has the right to speak and everyone has the responsibility to listen. Listeners are most important in a circle.

4. Icebreaker:

Tell a funny story about a time when you needed help but refused to ask for it.

5. Create Values:

What is one thing that you need to feel like this is safe place for you to talk?

Examples...Trust, honesty etc.

6. Question Rounds (Opportunities to build relationships through story-telling, experiences, discussion topics): Refer to the value you picked to answer each question.

- A. Share a story about a time when you helped someone in need.
- B. Tell a story about a time when someone helped you through a difficult time.
- C. What would make it easier to share when you need help?

7. Closing Ceremony (reading, music, spoken word, song, meditation, drumming, etc):

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Circle Outline & Prep Sheet

Healing Circle –

1. Welcome (greeting, Check-in)

Check-in:

(Scale 1-10)

2. Share the purpose of the circle & basic expectations (i.e. confidentiality, cell phone use, etc):

The purpose of this circle is to begin the healing process after traumatic experiences.

3. Explain Center and Use of Talking Pieces:

The talking piece is used to determine who has the right to speak. Whoever has the talking piece has the right to speak and everyone has the responsibility to listen. Listeners are most important in a circle.

4. Opening: I have a future hope - Anonymous

5. Ice Breaker: What food brings you comfort?

6. Create Values:

What is one thing that you need to feel like this is safe place for you to talk?

Examples...Trust, honesty etc.

7. Question Rounds (Opportunities to build relationships through story-telling, experiences, discussion topics): Refer to the value you picked to answer each question.

- A. Share a challenge or challenges that you are overcoming.
- B. Share your story of how you have made lemonade out of lemons.
- C. In one word or sentence describe what help you need.

Checkout: What emotion are you experiencing now... Sad, excited, passion, happy, content, fear, anger or hurt?

8. Closing Ceremony (reading, music, spoken word, song, meditation, drumming, etc):

"If you're going through a dark period, remember that you're not alone." – Steven L. Peck

What does this quote mean to you?

Circle Outline & Prep Sheet

Power to Decide Circles

1. Welcome (greeting, Check-in)

Check-in:

(Scale 1-10)

2. Share the purpose of the circle & basic expectations (i.e. confidentiality, cell phone use, etc):

The purpose of this circle is to help participants to discover their power to decide. The power decide is the ability to choose my outcome by making choices that benefit myself and others.

3. Explain Center and Use of Talking Pieces:

The talking piece is used to determine who has the right to speak. Whoever has the talking piece has the right to speak and everyone has the responsibility to listen. Listeners are most important in a circle.

Opening: "Even when there's no signs of hope, keep hoping", Lecrae

Icebreaker:

4. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Why?

5. Create Values:

What is one thing that you need to feel like this is safe place for you to talk?
Examples...Trust, honesty etc.

6. Question Rounds (Opportunities to build relationships through story-telling, experiences, discussion topics): Refer to the value you picked to answer each question.

- A. What is the hope that you have for your life?
- B. Tell a story about a time that you made a decision you were proud of.
- C. Tell a story about a time that you made a decision that you regretted.
- D. What is one decision you can make today that can help you move towards your future hope?

7. Closing Ceremony (reading, music, spoken word, song, meditation, drumming, etc):

"Life is about choices. Some we regret, some we're proud of. Some will haunt us forever. The message: we are what we chose to be." Graham Brown

Circle Outline & Prep Sheet

Harm Circle –

1. Welcome (greeting, Check-in)

Check-in:

(Scale 1-10)

2. Share the purpose of the circle & basic expectations (i.e. confidentiality, cell phone use, etc):

The purpose of this circle is to discuss that everyone needs help from others.

3. Explain Center and Use of Talking Pieces:

The talking piece is used to determine who has the right to speak. Whoever has the talking piece has the right to speak and everyone has the responsibility to listen. Listeners are most important in a circle.

4. Opening: "Life is relationships, the rest is just details". Gary Smalley

5. Icebreaker:

If you could describe yourself as an animal, which animal would you describe yourself as and why?

6. Create Values:

What is one thing that you need to feel like this is safe place for you to talk?
Examples...Trust, honesty etc.

7. Question Rounds (Opportunities to build relationships through story-telling, experiences, discussion topics): Refer to the value you picked to answer each question.

- A. Share a story about a time when you harmed someone?
- B. Tell a story about a time when you were harmed by someone?
- C. What did you need from the person that harmed you?
- D. What were you willing to give to the person that you harmed?

8. Closing Ceremony (reading, music, spoken word, song, meditation, drumming, etc):

If you never heal from what hurt you, you will bleed on people who didn't cut you.
Tamara Kulish

What does this quote mean to you?