Divide and Transplant: Harvesting Ideas from Your Story Circle

Story circles are powerful precisely because of the human connections that are made; because of the opportunity to tell a personal story and to be heard; because of the expansiveness that is created when we listen deeply to another’s lived experience. The story circle provides a brief but potentially transformative encounter – the nutrient-rich soil in which the garden will grow. Facilitators should be prepared to offer additional key ingredients to maintain a healthy, flourishing garden beyond the scope of the story circle itself.

These might include:

- **A Resource List** – these could be books, articles, websites, podcasts, local or national organizations, etc. that are related to the story circle topic and will provide additional opportunities to learn and become engaged. You may choose to make this a living document that can be added to by participants once the story circle is concluded.

- **Contact List** – participants may be invited, but not required, to share their contact information to be distributed by the facilitator to all participants. This will provide an avenue for participants to continue exploring the topic together.

- **Group Reflection** – at the conclusion of the story circle, participants may be asked to reflect on key learnings from the experience and collectively generate a list of potential action steps.

- **Commitment Cards** – participants may be asked to write an action goal for themselves that can be taken as a reminder of the experience.

- **Creative Manifestation** – the essence of the stories shared (with permission of the participants) and the resulting collective understanding can be transformed into an artistic rendering to be shared with a wider audience. For example:

  - **Word Cloud** – Participants are given 30 seconds to quickly write as many words as possible to describe the feelings, thoughts, understandings brought up by the story circle. These are then compiled by the facilitator into a Word Cloud by using an online source like wordclouds.com or wordart.com.

  - **Haiku** – Participants use their reflection points to create a Haiku. An example handout for this exercise is included in this packet.

  - **Visual Art** – A rendering that depicts a vision for the future.

**Story Circle Haiku**

**Haiku:** Japanese poetry form that uses just a few words to capture a moment and create a picture in the reader’s mind.

**Traditional:** Three lines with 5/7/5 syllable count.

**Characteristics:** Often focus on nature, which could be expanded to include human nature; reference to time (e.g., snow); use of provocative, colorful images that evoke a feeling; able to be read in one breath; sense of sudden enlightenment and illumination.

**Example:**

Sun-powered school days
Crunch of local apples fuel
Imaginations.

In the space below, transform the ideas from your story circle experience into a haiku.

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Gather to Grow: A Cedar Valley Story Circle Project is a community engagement project of the University of Northern Iowa Imagining America
Learn more: https://engagement.uni.edu/imaging-america