

## **2019 Leader Circles for the Emerging Leaders Alumni Program**

**Participants:** Open to all Emerging Leaders alumni. This is an opt-in program that will run for 9 months – from March through November 2019. By opting in, alumni are committing to engaged participation and making the Leader Circle a high priority over this 9-month period. To participate, you must register for a training and indicate your preferred meeting days and times by February 13, 2019.

Each Leader Circle will have 5 (or 6, if necessary) members in it, and Sarah Harris will form the memberships of each circle. We will put the circles together based upon when and where people would like to meet.

Everyone who signs up to be in a 2019 Leader Circle must participate in a mandatory training session. The Leader Circle process is similar to the process we used in ELP Peer Learning Circles, but there are differences. Ken Saxon will offer two 90 minute in-person trainings in late February 2019.

**Meetings:** The Leader Circles will meet once each month between March and November 2019, ideally in person (though some groups have used video-conferencing). You will be given a choice as to whether you want to participate in-person or via video-conferencing. Each session will run for two hours or less. If social time is planned, that should be scheduled either before or after the two-hour Leader Circle session.

**Structure:** The sessions will be scheduled for two hours at maximum, but will likely go a little bit shorter (except in the groups where there are 6 participants). Each of the five (or six) participants will have a 15-minute time slot (with one minute of silence in between).

Participants should each come to each Leader Circle session with a question, challenge, or priority about which they would like to receive honest, open questions or resource sharing.

The Opening of each Leader Circle will take up to 20 minutes, and will include a check-in of less than 10 minutes (target 1-2 minutes per person) that will give each participant a chance to offer a brief personal/professional check-in updating the group about something in their life or on their mind that they want to share. And there will be a 10 minute Closing, where learnings are captured before a brief closing circle.

**Preparation:** In advance of each session, participants should note their issue, challenge, or priority for the session on the top half of their Monthly Session Participant Form (a sample of which can be found at the end of this document).

You should also come with a plan for *how* you want to receive support from your fellow circle members, choosing from the following:

- Open Honest Questions – helps you tap into your own resourcefulness and gain clarity.
- Resource Sharing – helps you discover other resources to support you in expanding your possibilities. Sharing resources typically takes the form of either brainstorming or the sharing of teaching stories. *Brainstorming* – helps the presenter surface other ideas and approaches, without judgment. *Sharing teaching stories* helps the presenter hear the wisdom of others who have experience in similar situations. *Sharing resources* also gives us a chance to share specific resources that might be helpful.

*Tips:*

1. LEADER CIRCLE participants have sometimes found it helpful to send out their issue or goal ahead of time so that other members of the group can be considering it before hand.
2. At each LEADER CIRCLE, presenters can specify whether they would welcome follow-up communications regarding their issue such as further resource sharing.
3. Following the LEADER CIRCLE, some groups have set up some kinds of a shared drive (like Drop Box) for sharing of readings, information, and resources. You can also email to each other.

**Facilitation:** All Leader Circle participants will be trained to facilitate a session. Everyone in the group takes responsibility for making the Leader Circle work as intended, but each month one participant will volunteer to be the Facilitator for that session. The Facilitator responsibility includes:

- Reminding participants of the time, date and venue (or conference call number) for the upcoming Leader Circle.
- Initiating the 2-hour Leader Circle session, and keeping it running on time.
- Making sure the group has a time, date and venue (or video conference link) for the next session before they leave the current one.
- If something is not working right in your Leader Circle, and that's getting in the way of each person having a reliably constructive experience in each session, then it's the Facilitator's responsibility to communicate it to the ELP Alumni Community Coordinator.

*Tips:*

- Some participants send out a brief poem or reading in advance when it is their turn to facilitate. They then use the poem or reading to start the meeting and help people become present. Participants have commented that this helps them be more prepared for the LEADER CIRCLE session.
- Use Doodle <http://doodle.com> for help with scheduling as needed.

Emerging Leaders Alumni Program

Leader Circle – Monthly Session Participant Form

Session Date:

My objectives for this session:

*Question/ priority/ issue I want to briefly present to my Leader Circle so they can help further my learning and support me*

*What may be most helpful to receive from my fellow participants?*

\_\_\_ *open honest questions*

\_\_\_ *Resource sharing*

Things I learned in this session that I want to remember and use:

Actions I will take prior to our next session:

*Emerging Leaders Alumni Program*

**Leader Circle Call/Meeting Debrief Form**

Immediately after each Leader Circle meeting, the facilitator of the meeting should thoughtfully fill out this form and email it to Sarah Harris at [sarah@leading-from-within.org](mailto:sarah@leading-from-within.org) so your circle and others can benefit from your experience. Thank you.

-----

*Date of Meeting:*

*Who participated in your LEADER CIRCLE meeting/call? Who could not?*

*What kinds of issues/questions did participants use their time for? (Do not share specific content. Just give general categories of questions and issues, such as management, relationships, transition, etc.)*

*What worked well in your session?*

*What didn't work well in your session?*

*If you had it to do over again, how might you have facilitated this Circle differently?*

*Who is the facilitator for the next Leader Circle meeting? What is your Circle's next meeting date, and where will it be held?*

*Anything else you want to share about your Leader Circle and this particular session?*

## Sample Leader Circle Agenda

- I. Read out loud our Leader Circle Ground Rules:
  - a. Participate fully in Leader Circle
  - b. Communicate your needs. If your needs are not being met, say so.
  - c. Respect other members' needs, and the way they desire to receive support.
  - d. Be on time, and end on time, including taking no more than the prescribed time during the opening check-in as well as when you are the presenter
  - e. Assure confidentiality
  - f. Manage your time slot, and come to the session clear about what kind of support you want. Help your Leader Circle to help you.
  - g. All contributions are honored.
  
- II. Check-in –opportunity (for up to a minute or so) to check in and update the group about something in their work and lives that they want to share.
  
- III. Review Guidelines for supporting each other in our Leader Circles
  - a. Presenter of Issue
    - i. Explain your objective/issue/priority in no more than 2-3 minutes
    - ii. Be brief in your descriptions and answers
    - iii. Explain your objective/issue/priority in terms of the **here-and-now/current**.
    - iv. Describe your feelings about your objective/issue/priority, when applicable.
    - v. Use **"I" statements** as much as possible in your explanations.
    - vi. Be clear about the type of support you want: honest, open questions or resource sharing.
  - b. Supporting Others
    - i. Listen closely, focusing on presenter's objective/learning goal.
    - ii. Be concise.
    - iii. Ask useful questions about the **presenter's** perspectives, assumptions, actions, etc.
    - iv. Limit advice and discussion.
    - v. Help the presenter come to specific actions and learning, where applicable. Towards the end of the 15-minute session, participants might consider asking questions that can help the presenter come to specific learnings and actions they can take to move things forward (i.e. "What is one thing you might do in the next month to bring this to reality?")
    - vi. Intervene if the Leader Circle gets off track. A friendly way to do this is to say, "We have (x-number) minutes left. Where would you like to go from here?"

#### IV. Managing Time Slots

- a. Each person gets the same amount of time to be helped in each meeting.
- b. Ask for a volunteer to go first and decide up front on the order you will go in.
- c. The presenter describes their objective/issue/priority in no more than 2-3 minutes, and asks for the kind of support they want during their time slot (i.e. questions or sharing resources)
- d. It works best when each member actively supports the presenter during the presenter's time slot.
- e. It's helpful for the facilitator to set an audible alarm (using their phone) to go off at the end of each presenter's time. When the alarm is sounded, the presenter should quickly bring her/his session to an end. The facilitator then should invite the group into a minute of silence when the presenter (and anyone else who wants to) can note down learnings and actions on the bottom half of their Monthly Participant Session Form.
- f. After the minute of silence, the next presenter will take their turn.
- g. When it's time for the facilitator to be the presenter, someone else should agree to watch the time.

#### V. Closing

- a. *Capture Actions & Learnings* - Invite each person to continue filling out the sections in the session form provided in response to "Things I learned in this session that I want to remember and use" and "Actions I will take prior to our next session."
- b. *Share Learnings Out Loud* – Invite group members to each share a learning / takeaway from today's session.
- c. Confirm the date, time and place for the next Leader Circle and invite someone to take their turn to facilitate that session.
- d. *Closing Circle* – Provide space for each participant (if they choose) to articulate one brief appreciation for the time they have just spent together.

## Resource Sharing

Resource Sharing helps the presenter discover other resources to support them in expanding their possibilities. Sharing resources typically takes the form of either brainstorming, sharing of specific resources, or the sharing of teaching stories. We are all practiced in asking honest, open questions, but many of us are not so practiced in the practice of resource sharing. Here are tips and structures for resource sharing.

### Brainstorming

Brainstorming was designed for developing creative ideas and solutions to problems. There are four general rules for of brainstorming:

- **Focus on quantity:** This rule is a means of enhancing divergent production, aiming to facilitate problem solving through the maxim *quantity breeds quality*. The assumption is that the greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution.
- **Withhold criticism:** In brainstorming, criticism of ideas generated should be put 'on hold'. Instead, participants should focus on extending or adding to ideas, reserving criticism for a later 'critical stage' of the process. By suspending judgment, participants will feel free to generate unusual ideas.
- **Welcome unusual ideas:** To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed. They can be generated by looking from new perspectives and suspending assumptions. These new ways of thinking may provide better solutions.
- **Combine and improve ideas:** Good ideas may be combined to form a single better good idea, as suggested by the slogan "1+1=3". It is believed to stimulate the building of ideas by a process of association.

### Sharing of Teaching Stories

*Sharing of teaching stories* helps the presenter hear the wisdom of others who have experience in similar situations. Stories should be kept brief and to the point. Teaching stories should have a specific teaching or sharing of wisdom as their focus. They might include the sharing of a similar experience, but that is not their point. Their point is the sharing of the teaching that comes through from the sharing of the story.

### Sharing of Specific Resources

We have the opportunity to share specific resources. This might be the title of a book, a video, or a person to talk to. If sharing the resource will be time consuming for any reason, then mention the resource and send out a reference to the resource to the circle through email. Along with sharing the resource, you will most likely want to share the purpose or relevance of the resource to the presenter's issue. Make sure to keep this brief and to the point.