

## **Learning Circle Intention Exercise**

This is a helpful exercise to do when your group first comes together. It will set the tone by allowing people to articulate their intentions for joining the Learning Circle and it will also give everyone the opportunity to hear about each other's intentions and motivations. However, this exercise can also be reused after your group has been together for a while to refresh and renew the individual and collective intentions for the circle.

1. Set the space by taking a few moments of silence with your group. Then ask everyone to mentally reflect as you pose the following questions, why am I here? What do I intend for myself by doing this practice? By participating in this group? What is a hope I have for myself in this group? What is a fear?
2. Next, ask your learning circle to use pen and paper to jot down answers to the questions listed above.
3. Now, in a "go around the circle" style of discussion, ask to hear from everyone what they wrote down. Implement a time limit for each person if need be, for example, each person has 3-5 minutes to share.
4. As the host, listen carefully to the key themes that the group is sharing, usually there will be a few that get repeated using different phrases and wording.
5. Once everyone is complete with the sharing, reflect back to the group some of the key ideas you heard, allow people the time to see that they are all there for the same kinds of reasons: community, connection, spiritual nourishment, etc.
6. Now is a good time to open up the floor for organic discussion and feedback and present the following questions: How does intention shift outcomes? In setting an intention how might you possibly create an easier path to fulfillment? Can you reflect on times when you did and did not act with intention? Was there a difference? Implement a time limit for this discussion if need be.
7. In closing, ask everyone to return to their list of written intentions from #2 and beneath it, write out 1 or 2 personal action items that will support them in fulfilling their

intention. For example: If I have an intention to find support for my spiritual practice, perhaps an action item for me is to come to the circle every week and then to ask one person in the group to tea so that we may have the opportunity to share more deeply with one other.

8. Take a moment of silence to close this activity and thank everyone for participating.

Modification: If you would like to make this exercise more interactive for your group, in step #3, provide slips of paper for everyone to write on and ask people to choose one key intention to write on the paper and put in a box in the center of the circle. Then, go around the circle and have everyone pull an intention out of the box. Each person will then read the intention they pulled and first guess who they think wrote it and second, share what they think/feel about that intention and how they personally relate to it (is their intention similar or different).

Recyclable Version 2.0: If you have been with your group for a while and want to revisit your original intentions, you can follow the same format, but for #1, use the following questions: "How has my intention shifted? How have my hopes for the group been fulfilled? How have my fears played out? What do I see happening for myself in the circle now? For the group as a whole?" Also, if it is applicable to your group, for #6 you can use the information from this exercise to rewrite your group agreements and possibly shift/adjust the focus for the group. For example, if the group has been mostly practice-based but now people want more connection, then perhaps the group can redesign their collective time to incorporate more sharing and reflection.

