

CreativelyConnected™ in the Workplace



Addressing Isolation and
Employee Engagement through
Creative Expression

PROGRAM TOOLKIT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SAMPLE EXERCISE



The Foundation for
Art & Healing

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Creativity Circle Toolkit is a comprehensive guide for planning and implementing a Creativity Circle program. Group sessions that use storytelling and other creative artistic expressions to bring people together, to build relationships, and to connect with one another, the Creativity Circles are designed to help individuals suffering from loneliness and isolation to engage, connect, and discover new pathways to a healthier life. The Creativity Circle sessions include interactive and expressive activities within collaborative experiences that are creative, meaningful and fun. A Creativity Circle program can result in enhanced vitality and well-being as well as reduced healthcare costs and higher performing employees.

In addition to a research-based rationale for the value of creative artistic expression and the need to address loneliness, the Toolkit includes a comprehensive planning framework with a checklist, and guidelines for the facilitator of the program. It also includes a section for selecting or recruiting participants, suggestions for communication strategies, and guidelines for those who want to include an evaluation component. The heart of the Toolkit is found in the curriculum, detailed instructions for facilitating the six creative sessions with your participants. While these instructions are comprehensive, they offer the facilitator flexibility for creating unique experiences tailored to the participants' and the organization's needs.

Creative expression offers a pathway for us into experiencing the present moment fully, and allows us the opportunity to communicate in a new language. The very act of being creative provides a sense of personal accomplishment and enhanced self-confidence, at the same time helping us to develop alternative perspectives about ourselves and the world around us. Connecting through creativity is a powerful tool.

Research has shown that participation in creative expression can reduce a sense of loneliness and isolation, allowing us to better thrive. Research has also shown that the physiological effects of feeling disconnected, lonely and isolated contribute to increased rates of mortality. Creative expression can contribute to both the quality of life and its longevity.

Planning

The planning framework, a series of questions that will help you assess your capacity to host a Creativity Circle program, will assist you in planning, implementing, and evaluating the group sessions. You will use these questions to determine

the specific resources needed, the population you will serve, and your current capability to implement the program. The Toolkit also includes a Planning Checklist.

Facilitation

The facilitator plays a critical role in shaping and guiding the process of the group as it works to accomplish the established goals. In this section you will find the necessary attributes, skills and experiences a facilitator needs to successfully lead a Creativity Circle. The Toolkit includes a tutorial on management techniques to guide the facilitator in creating an open, nonjudgmental environment for participants. Making efforts to help the group cohere will result in greater participant involvement and satisfaction.

Participation

Organizational leaders will need to identify and select the right population to meet engagement and educational goals. The Toolkit offers ideas for the recruitment and selection of participants as well as for marketing and communication within your organization and the community. In this section we also address potential recruitment roadblocks such as financial challenges and time constraints.

Communications

To create interest in your Creativity Circle program and help sustain it in the long term, it will be important to publicize the program across the organization and share it with a wider community. The Toolkit offers you several strategies for generating a buzz around your Creativity Circle program, as well as suggestions for communicating the outcomes to enhance continuity.

Evaluation

Evaluation is necessary if you want to gauge the success of your Creativity Circle program and improve the outcomes. A framework in this section provides guidance on creating an evaluation protocol, if you need it. We offer suggestions for metrics to measure whether your organization's goals and objectives were met by the program, and propose routes for securing licensing of survey instruments that require them.

Creativity Circles Curriculum

The curriculum included in the Toolkit guides the facilitator of a Creativity Circle program through each of the six sessions. The program includes the flexibility for adjustments and adaptations along the way, in response to the individual needs of different groups of participants.

For each session we offer detailed guidelines for the organization of the workspace, point out what materials are needed, offer an overview of the session and warm-up activities, guide you through the various activities within the session, and conclude with a closing for the session.

Creating Enduring Connections

Guiding Question

Which social interactions come easily to me, and which ones are more difficult? Why?

Materials

- Paint brushes
- Thick watercolor painting paper
- Tempera paints, basic colors
- Paint tray with divided slots for various colors
- Several mason jars filled with water
- Paper towels

Introductions with gestures

This somatic exercise not only helps participants to remember one another's names by associating them with individualized movements, it is also a fun ice-breaker. As each participant takes the risk of being the center of attention, a greater bond of trust is formed as he or she experiences acceptance and mirroring from the group.

Story-sharing component

The week's theme is introduced, creating enduring connections, and the facilitator asks for volunteers to briefly tell their story (in three minutes or less). The first person holds the talking stick and then passes it to the next person who volunteers.

Painting activity

In this activity participants paint words and images of the barriers to creating enduring connections. They are encouraged to be creative about lettering, using different colors or fonts, etc. After viewing others' work they return to their own and paint the names or images of helpful, supportive people, ideas, or things that inspire them to create enduring connections. Again, they are encouraged to take time to beautify these images, get creative, and have fun.

Journal time

Participants are encouraged to write in their journals and reflect on what the painting exercise felt like for them.

Closing

Everyone in the circle says one word that describes their experience this session. The facilitator suggests that they add reflections in their journal.





About the Foundation

The Foundation for Art & Healing, Inc. (FAH), a 501(c)(3) public charity, was founded in 2004 to explore and raise awareness about the connection between creative arts expression, health, and well-being. FAH's mission is to expand general awareness about the relationship between art and healing, and to bring forward critical knowledge through research and related explorations. FAH works to help make the health benefits of creative expression available at the individual and community level.

Learn more at www.artandhealing.org/unlonely
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