

Supporting learning resource — Yarning circles

The following describes one Yarning circle process.

In the Yarning circle process all participants are provided with an opportunity to have their say in a safe space without judgment. Each participant speaks, one at a time, is heard and not interrupted. This is a process that involves and develops deep listening, sharing of knowledge and development of higher order thinking skills and establishing rules of respect.

It is a multipurpose tool. The Yarning circle can be used to:

- develop a common understanding of a book and its meaning
- develop a circumstance
- develop historical knowledge and understanding
- develop historical skills such as the posing of questions
- build understanding of place or time
- share cultural knowledge and standpoint
- unpack the positioning of an author or song writer/artist.

The Yarning circle can be utilised to build a deeper understanding of class dynamics and the eccentricities of its cohort. Its implementation into a class setting will grow and evolve the participant's natural higher order thinking ability which not only benefits the individual but also establishes higher expectations of those involved in the process.

Processes and protocols:

For a clear understanding of the protocols and processes of the Yarning/Dialogue circles, refer to [Dialogue Circles — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives – Resources](#).

Introduce Yarning circles to the students

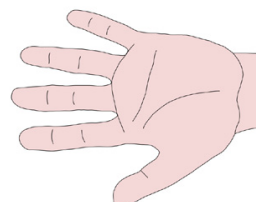
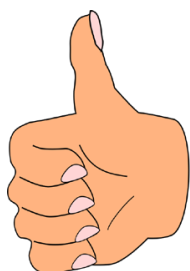
Yarning circles have been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years to discuss issues in an inclusive and collaborative matter. We can follow the model of the Yarning circle to discuss deep issues. It is important to be present, to have respectful interactions, to be open and honest, to listen deeply, acknowledge others and offer your own thoughts and feelings in turn.

Process:

Note: Due to the nature of children aged 5 to 7 years old, teachers of this age group will need to make the necessary adjustments to time spent sitting in circle.

1. Form a complete circle
 - As a class group, form a complete circle.
 - Ensure that everyone is seated equally and that everyone can see all participants in the circle.
2. Explain that everyone is equal and all responses are valid
 - Explain that in the circle, everyone is equal, including the teacher, and that everyone's responses are valid.
 - Ensure that all participants understand that the circle is a safe place where everyone is required to contribute and where all opinions are valid.
 - Explain that a response may be a word, sentence or extended explanation.

3. Use an artefact to signal when participants speak
 - Pass around an artefact to signal when it is a participant's turn to speak.
 - Ensure that participants understand that they cannot talk without the artefact and that there can be no conversation across the circle.
 - Explain that anyone can start, but that the artefact must be passed in a clockwise or anti-clockwise direction to all participants in the circle until everyone has had an opportunity to contribute.
 - Ensure that participants understand that if they want to address something someone has just said, they must wait their turn. Explain that it is okay to disagree; just wait for your turn to speak.
4. 'Check in' before the yarn starts
 - Explain that before the yarn starts all participants must 'check in' in relation to the issue.
 - Demonstrate that this is done by showing thumbs up, thumbs down or flat palms to demonstrate how you feel about the issue for discussion.
5. Listen and be respectful to speakers
 - Explain that when the holder of the artefact is speaking, everyone must listen to their words.
 - Explain that participants are aiming for deep listening and being respectful to the speakers — that they need to take the speakers' words in and think about their meaning.
6. 'Check out' when the yarn is complete
 - Explain that when the discussion is complete all participants must 'check out'.
 - Demonstrate that this is done by showing thumbs up, thumbs down or flat palms to demonstrate how you feel after the discussion.



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