

## What is a Girls Circle?

The Girls Circle is a model of structured support groups for girls from 9-18 years. It is designed to foster self-esteem, help girls maintain authentic connection with peers and adult women in their community, counter trends toward self-doubt, and allow for genuine self-expression through verbal sharing and creative activity.

Each week, a group of six to ten girls of similar age and development meet with a facilitator for a couple hours. During this time the girls take turns talking and listening to one another about their concerns and interests. The girls can express themselves further through creative or focused activities such as role playing, drama, journaling, poetry, movement, drawing, collage, clay, computer, and so on. Oftentimes, themes are introduced which relate to the girls' lives - such as being a girl, trusting ourselves, friendships, body image, goals, competition, and decision-making.

To participate, girls need only to have the desire, make a commitment to attend the meetings, and agree to follow the circle guidelines: no put-downs or interruptions, offer experiences - not advice; keep the focus on oneself; and keep what's said in the group private. Girls are free to share at their own pace. Through listening and respect for themselves and others, participants can reflect on and express their own thoughts and feelings with peers.

The Girls Circle does not aim to provide advice, but encourages girls to share experiences that are helpful to one another.

When girls voice their ideas and opinions in a safe environment, it strengthens their confidence and encourages them to express themselves more fully. By examining cultural expectations in a safe and supportive setting, girls gain greater awareness of their options and strengthen their ability to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests, and talents.

The Girls Circle model has been applied to programs in areas such as juvenile probation, schools, peer leadership, health education, economic literacy, outdoor adventure, positive youth development, athletics, pregnancy prevention, boys and girls clubs, scouting groups, school advisory groups, gang-prevention, and substance abuse prevention – wherever girls come together!