

# Spiritual Companions Circles

## Checklist for SC Mentors



- 1 What is a Spiritual Companions Circle?
- 2 How an SC Circle Works
- 3 Group Contract, Safety and Support

### 1 What is a Spiritual Companions Circle?

Description	Facilitator Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A safe facilitated meeting of people exploring their personal and spiritual development</li> <li>• Has no religious or spiritual belief or doctrine underlying them</li> <li>• Is open-hearted, open-minded and inclusive — everyone is welcome</li> <li>• Is not a psychotherapy or healing group</li> <li>• Can be open or closed • Usually free</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What is a manageable number of people for you?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Will my group be open or closed? It could start open and then close — to be negotiated</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How often will my group meet and for how long? (eg: every 6 weeks for 2 hours)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there any costs to cover for the room or refreshments?</li> </ul>

### 2 How an SC Circle Works

Description	Facilitator Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always start and end with a period of meditation (minimum 5 minutes)</li> <li>• After meditation always have a check-in round where everyone shares briefly about their current mood and state of wellbeing</li> <li>• After the check-in, the main purpose of the Circle begins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> How long will the silence be at the start and end (may well change over time)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decide whether to time-boundary the check-in process (e.g. 2 minutes each) or self regulate?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What will be the main purpose of my Circle? (may also change over time by agreement)</li> </ul>

### 3 Group Contract, Safety and Support ...

Description	Facilitator Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendees must look at and agree to the Group Contract before they join</li> <li>• A Group Contract sets expectations of how to behave and treat each other</li> <li>• Having a clear set of expectations and guidelines creates a safe structure and allows everyone to participate safely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Before being with group do appropriate inner work: greet their souls in meditation; acknowledge group spirit; prepare for tonglen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check that you are in hara, holding, patient, strong and generous</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do you need extra supervision/support? Get it 😊</li> </ul>

# Spiritual Companions Circles

## Useful Information for Mentors



### Choosing an Open or Closed Circle

Open Circles	Closed Circles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No fixed membership but need to decide whether to open to anyone, or just members from within the SC network</li> <li>Typically has a primary purpose that the SC Mentor decides and communicates</li> <li>SC Mentor can also negotiate with a core group the purpose of an Open Circle.</li> <li>An Open Circle may have a more social and light-touch approach than a closed circle</li> <li>We recommend a maximum size of 20. Small groups of 3 or 4 can be very successful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically smaller than open circles with high levels of mutual trust</li> <li>May offer more intense levels of challenge and feedback to stimulate and support greater spiritual and personal development.</li> <li>Often develop from a core group within an open circle that wants to connect more deeply</li> <li>Can meet in person or could be Skype based</li> <li>Can be as small as 3 and we recommend a maximum size of 12</li> <li>Larger numbers need longer sessions to ensure everyone is fully included</li> </ul>

### Primary Purpose and Facilitation Skills

You need to be Clear about Primary Purpose	Facilitation Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Meditation</b> Focus is on stillness and calm</li> <li><b>Rigorous &amp; Transparent</b> Focus is on honest sharing and feedback</li> <li><b>Philosophical Discussion</b> Focus is on sharing ideas and perspectives on spirituality</li> <li><b>Book Club / Study Group</b> Focus is on learning, guest speakers and sharing on specific topics</li> <li><b>Personal Sharing / Emotional Support</b> Focus is on hearing peoples' stories and emotional support</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> It is important not to mix purposes and to be explicit and consistent about group purpose</p>	<p><b>It is the SC Facilitator's responsibility to</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a welcoming and safe space</li> <li>Ensure that the Group Contract is respected</li> <li>Keep clear time limits and ensure equal and democratic participation</li> <li>Consistently hold the space with love and generosity of spirit</li> <li>Practice Tonglen, prayer and other inner work to support the group</li> <li>Model whole body listening</li> <li>Be transparent about your own challenges and appropriately disclose</li> <li>Be humble and self-aware of your own learning process</li> <li>Stay in hara throughout the session</li> <li>Take challenges into supervision with a peer</li> <li>Be prepared to spend time outside the Circle with participants who are in crisis</li> <li>Adhere to the SC Guidelines, SC Agreement and SC Codes of Conduct</li> </ul>
Emotional Process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in Circles can trigger challenging emotions</li> <li>This is normal but Circles are not a psychotherapeutic space and that is clear in the Group Contract</li> <li>If 'stuff' is triggered we need to be able to hold space in the moment and refer appropriately</li> </ul>	

# Joining a Spiritual Companions Circle

## Introductory Information



- 1 What is a Spiritual Companions Circle?
- 2 How Does It Work?
- 3 How Do I Sign Up?

### 1 What is a Spiritual Companions Circle?

**Description**

A Spiritual Companions Circle is a safe and facilitated meeting of a small group of open-hearted and open-minded people who together share and explore their personal and spiritual development.

We believe that there are great benefits to be found in the solidarity, support and insights that can come from a meeting of fellow travellers.

Each circle is facilitated by a trained Spiritual Companion

### 2 How Does It Work?

Description	Description
<p><b>Costs and Timing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is typically no charge to join the Circle but donations may be requested to cover costs such as room hire or refreshments.</li> <li>The scheduling and length of each meeting is organised by each individual group, but in general they may last about two hours and happen every six weeks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Meditation and Check-In</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circles always begin and end with a meditation.</li> <li>There is also always a check-in round as each participant in the circle, one-by-one, shares briefly about their current state of wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Group Contract</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before joining a circle every participant needs to agree to the group contract, which covers things like good listening, confidentiality and politeness.</li> </ul> <p><b>Interests and Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each group chooses its own particular area of interest. This may be set in advance by the Spiritual Companions facilitator — e.g. meditation; philosophical discussion; book club; personal sharing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Open or Closed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some groups are open and allow a flow of new members. Some groups are closed and only invite new members when the group agrees.</li> </ul>

### 3 How Do I Join One?

Description	More Information?
<p><b>We warmly welcome you into a Circle.</b></p> <p>In Person: Speak to the person who gave you this flier.</p> <p>Contact our office and it will be a pleasure to help you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Spiritual Companions Trust is a registered charity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.spiritualcompanions.org">www.spiritualcompanions.org</a></li> </ul>

# Spiritual Companions Circles



## Group Contract

**Before joining a circle we ask every participant to read and agree to these guidelines. This is a prerequisite to joining a Circle and ensures that everyone feels safe and included. It is then the responsibility of the Spiritual Companions facilitator and all other group members to make sure the guidelines are followed.**

The following guidelines have been developed over several years by participants and facilitators meeting in groups similar to Spiritual Companions Circles.

1. We include and welcome everyone equally regardless of faith, belief, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, physical and mental abilities.
2. All personal information shared inside the group is confidential and not to be talked about beyond the group. We cannot repeat people's stories even if we use a different name – unless we have their permission.
3. We do not gossip about each other amongst ourselves or with anyone else.
4. We do not say anything about a group member, including the facilitators that we are not prepared to say to her or his face.
5. We are courteous, use our best listening skills and do not interrupt when someone is talking.
6. We make 'I' statements. (eg: "I do not agree with what you say" not "That's rubbish.")
7. If we have a problem with someone, we may criticise their words or behaviour but not their character.
8. We show respect and do not use put-downs.
9. We respect and consider the opinion of others.
10. We participate and engage through sharing our opinions and experiences.
11. We honour time limits when speaking and make space for others.
12. We take responsibility for our own individual needs including health and wellbeing.
13. We do not give advice to someone else unless it is asked for.
14. We arrive on time and switch off mobiles.
15. We maintain an appropriate sense of humour.
16. We respect each other's different beliefs.

### Emotional Process

It is possible that participation in these Circles might trigger some challenging emotions for you. That is normal and you will receive the facilitators' warm support. The Circles however are not a therapeutic group. So if 'stuff' is triggered for you, you can of course name it and report on it to the group, but we ask that you get appropriate support and counselling outside of the group. If needed, the Spiritual Companions Mentor will advise you on how to find someone appropriate.