

## Deep Colonisation Recovery Circles - an inner led approach to social change

The trauma of domination, superiority and colonisation have caused and continue to drive our most challenging crises at every level, from our bodies, through our relationships and our social structures. We need to be able to address this at every level to create lasting change.

**Deep Colonisation Recovery circles** are a format for connecting personal, relational and social change and healing. They are places to bring together the personal and political, the inner and the outer, to generate recovery and healing for ourselves and our wider societies.

**The format:** Regular (e.g. weekly) meetings in small (e.g. 4-10 people) to share our experience of colonisation and practise personal and cultural decolonisation and detraumatization. Over the course of a few weeks (e.g. 5-6 minimum), these groups develop the safety and support to begin to dig into and heal personal and cultural trauma together, co-creating ways to make social interventions that will address wider social trauma.

**The form:** There is no 'correct' way to do this - but our suggestion is - start simple:

1. Spend a few minutes being quiet together, with each person following their own practice for settling in their body and checking in with how they're feeling. If someone is leading this, be sure to leave plenty of quiet for people to follow their own process.
2. Divide the remaining time equally between those there, so each one can have roughly the same amount of time to speak. You can do this by the clock, or by each one's sense, depending on how flexible your time is. Make sure no one is left behind.
3. Speak in rounds, so that each person knows when their time to speak will come. This lightly ritual format has been used by humans for millennia and creates safety. Aim for at least two rounds if at all possible.
4. The light guidance for circle speaking is:
  - a. Speak from the heart and listen to others from the heart.
  - b. Don't interrupt or cross-talk - keep to the circle order.
  - c. Keep what's said confidential.
  - d. Take your time even if you have nothing to say - a whole round of silence could be just what's needed.
5. Aim to work in three rounds (you could think of these as: head, heart and hara - our centre of power in the guts): Each round has a question in relation to the theme your group has chosen (see list below). In round one the question is: what I think about the colonisation; in round two it is: what I feel about the colonisation; in round three it is: what next small wise step am I going to take to address the colonisation in myself or the wider world?

**The content:** Pick an area of shared focus for each session. If an idea comes up in the pre-circle chat, use that, or pick one from the list below.

Perfectionism  
Play  
Being/getting it right  
Professionalism  
Addiction

Gentleness  
Work  
Land  
Education  
Sleep

Health  
Conflict/fighting  
Money  
Death  
Authenticity



Power

Dance

Appearance

### **Useful notes**

It is advisable to have a pre-meeting with the group before diving into the rounds, to start to build relationships and share any expectations or anxieties. In diverse groups there will be very different experiences of colonisation and some people may need more time and/or safety than others. The best attitude to cultivate is one where the whole group is sensitive to these very different experiences - and we are willing to go at the pace of whoever needs most time so that we can all journey together.

We are on the road to recovery together and will make mistakes. Shared agreements can help us navigate those mistakes in healthier ways. If group members want to develop some shared agreements they will likely have their own ideas about what kind of agreements help them to relax and feel safe. It's worth taking time with this as it can make the difference between a supportive practice and a triggering one. Here are a couple of examples:

#### **Relationship with ourselves**

We will work to better understand our inner worlds, to heal our own trauma and to build self acceptance, love, capacity and resilience. We will work toward housing our sense of individuality within the wider collective that we are part of.

#### **Relationship with others**

We will work towards better understanding of our inter-relationships, being open and honest in our dealings with one another, working to treat one another with kindness and compassion, to heal ruptures between us and to the best of our ability focus on our shared purpose.

Prioritising the need for ongoing, growing, learning and understanding of both trauma and colonisation will keep the group working towards health and wholeness. Being gentle and empathic with ourselves and others while not shying away from difficult areas will help us avoid overwhelm.

A good rule of thumb to check whether we're moving towards health or re-experiencing trauma/domination is that healthy emotional responses move us (often through challenging territories of rage, grief, or fear) towards connection, fairness, relaxation and love - unhealthy ones don't.

Use the safety of the circle as place to practise, to build skills and strength to build awareness of your own and our collective power and which can help bring a grounded sense of vulnerability, honesty, challenge and a decolonising awareness to places in your life which are not so safe and which don't yet have agreements around the need for deep change e.g. our families of origin, communities or workplaces.

Ongoing education is also crucial. There are many great books, websites and other resources that can help develop our thinking and practice. Here are some good places to start:

[Red Nation](#)

[Starter Culture](#)

[Gesturing Toward Decolonial Futures](#)

[Allyship and Anti-Oppression resource guide](#)

[Deep Adaptation decolonisation resource page](#)

[Here are some more thoughts](#) on decolonising our meeting and decision making practices.

