



PARENT CIRCLE · FACILITATOR GUIDE

Running a Parent Circle

Six to eight parents going through the same hard season, meeting every two weeks to practice calm and not feel alone.

WHO IT IS FOR

Parents in a separation, divorce or custody case

FORMAT

6 to 8 parents, about 90 minutes, online or in person

WHAT IT IS

Education and peer support. Not therapy, not legal advice

STATUS

Draft for review by the founder and a licensed professional

THE PURPOSE

A child needs one steady adult, and that adult needs steady people too.

The circle gives parents a place to practice one skill at a time, hear that others are in the same season, and leave a little calmer than they arrived. Every session comes back to one question: will this make the child safer and steadier?

GROUND RULES, READ ALOUD EVERY TIME

- 1 **What is said here stays here.** The only exception is safety, covered below.
- 2 **No fighting about the other parent.** Talk about your own choices and your own child.
- 3 **No legal advice.** Nobody in the room is your lawyer, and the facilitator is not either.
- 4 **Everyone gets a turn, and anyone can pass.**
- 5 **Advice only when asked.** Say "what helped me was" instead of "you should."

A 90 MINUTE SESSION

TIME	WHAT HAPPENS	NOTES
0 to 10	Arrive, read the ground rules, one slow breath together	Use the calm-first exercise from the course
10 to 25	Check-in: one word for how this week went	No fixing, just listening
25 to 55	One skill from the course, taught briefly	For example: boring handoffs, what is under the anger, saying "I was wrong" to a child
55 to 80	Practice in pairs, then share what was hard	Use ready phrases; rehearse a real message
80 to 90	One thing I will try before next time; close	Offer the 14 night reflection guide

KEEPING THE ROOM SAFE

- **If someone describes abuse or danger**, pause the group conversation, thank them, and speak with them privately afterward. Share the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233, and the number for emergencies, 911.
- **If someone mentions harming themselves**, stay calm, stay with them, and connect them to 988 (call or text) or emergency services. Do not leave it for next time.
- **If a child may be at risk**, facilitators should know their state's reporting rules before the first session. Confirm the exact duties with counsel.
- **If a parent is in crisis**, a circle is the wrong tool. Refer to a licensed therapist, a family attorney or a court self-help center.

WHEN A CIRCLE GOES SIDEWAYS

- **Someone vents about the ex for ten minutes.** Name it kindly, then ask: "What is one thing you can do this week that helps your child?"
- **Two people argue.** Pause, breathe, return to the ground rules, and speak to each separately afterward.
- **Someone asks for legal advice.** "I can't help with that here. A family law self-help center or an attorney can."
- **Someone goes quiet.** Leave the door open. Check in privately, not in front of the group.

WHO DOES WHAT

#	OWNER	ACTION	DONE WHEN
1	Founder	Review this guide and mark any session content the founder wants changed	Edits returned
2	Licensed professional	Review safety steps and referral language	Written sign-off
3	Counsel	Confirm reporting duties and what facilitators may and may not say	Short written memo
4	Facilitator	Train on the ground rules and run a practice session with colleagues	One practice session held

Draft for discussion. Education only: not therapy, a diagnosis or legal advice. Steadier Homes is a working name.