



LESSON PLAN: We Are a Product of Our Stories

Topic: Sharing Circle

Subject | Stream:

Health & Wellness

Social Studies

Grade Level:

Junior to Senior (Grades 4 to 12)

Objective(s):

- Define brain tumour and its common implications on the human body.
- Encourage a safe space for participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with brain tumours (i.e.) a diagnosed friend or family member.
- Facilitate person-centered care and a therapeutic communication network as participants develop an understanding of associated trauma and its impact on mental wellbeing.
- Reassure participants that the Sharing Circle is a judgment-free zone and confidentiality will be maintained for all conversations facilitated.
- Participants are empowered to embrace their stories of brain tumours and address any misconceptions that may be a product of common stereotypes (a Sharing Circle participant may use their speaking-opportunity to ask critical questions or learn from the experiences of those around them).
- Participants are made aware of available counseling and mental health services.

Brief Summary:

The circle shape is used because, in a good circle, everyone can see into each other's eyes by simply turning their heads left or right; everyone is equal and interconnected, coming together in unity to build a sense of community.



205 Horton St. E,
Suite 203,
London, ON
N6B 1K7

519-642-7755
1-800-265-5106
www.braintumour.ca
www.tumeurscerebrales.ca



A circle has neither a starting nor an endpoint. The telling of stories in a Sharing Circle allows members to learn about similarities and differences among each other that may have previously been unknown.

The Sharing Circle gives members the opportunity to speak their minds and hearts without fearing judgment or inferiority.

Parameters for a Sharing Circle

- Only one member of the group is permitted to speak at any given time (this is the member that is in possession of the talking stick or inanimate object that designates their chance to speak).
- If another member of the group wishes to reply or has an opinion on what was said, they must wait until the talking stick returns to them.
 - No across-the-circle talking.
- If participants disagree with anything that is said, they must respond with “I respectfully disagree.”
- When a participant is finished voicing their ideas, they must pass the stick to the next person in the circle.
- If a participant experiences difficulty with speaking publicly to the circle, they are encouraged to look at the talking stick as they speak.

**If the facilitator requires the floor for a purpose, they will receive the stick to talk, clarify, stop, or interrupt a conversation to share a teachable moment.*

Resources | Materials Required per Pair:

- Talking stick (or any inanimate object that designates an individual as having the right to speak such that all others listen attentively and with respect).
- Tissue box (this activity can be emotionally-provoking for some participants).
- Enough space for participants to sit or stand in a circle formation.

Activity Instructions:

Step 1: Participants must sit on chairs, or on the floor, in a circle formation.

- In a good circle, all members have the opportunity to see into each other's eyes by





simply turning their heads to the left or right.

Step 2: Introduce yourself as the Facilitator and declare a statement of trust. *This activity is intended for participants to say what is in their hearts and minds. Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.*

Step 3: The Facilitator must stress the importance that a circle formation has in encouraging unity and interconnectedness; it is a judgment-free community where meaningful storytelling is encouraged.

Step 4: Demonstrate that the talking stick (or inanimate object) will be passed around the circle to indicate who is permitted to speak at that given moment.

- Participants are only permitted to speak when holding the talking stick, otherwise, they must attentively listen to others.

Step 5: Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings on the topic of brain tumours, alongside stories of affected friends and / or family, bottled-up emotions, and unanswered questions about diagnoses - the Sharing Circle is not intended to provide counseling, but rather, a safe space for storytelling and self-reflection.

Step 6: The Facilitator must address available counseling and mental health services to participants at the end of the activity (anonymity must be maintained).

***Note:** *All participants are permitted to pass' but are encouraged to share their stories.*

***Note:** *Take note of any participants that may live with anxiety, depression, or mental health conditions - These participants are welcome to take part in the circle with their class, however, they should be made aware that it is a safe space and they may choose to opt-out of the activity at any given moment.*

Key Points for Participants:

Take responsibility for yourself.

- Only you have the power to take control of your emotions; using *I* statements indicates ownership of feelings, perceptions, desires, etc.
- The Sharing Circle is an opportunity to practice self-reflection and care by speaking your truth, feeling seen and heard, and expressing who you really are.





Confidentiality!

- What is said, seen, or heard within the Sharing Circle is meant to remain private among participants. When sharing experiences with others, refrain from specifically naming individuals; share stories in an honoring manner that honestly portrays your experiences and related feelings.

Maintain Open-Mindedness.

- Keep in mind that there is always more for you to learn and benefit from in addition to your current knowledge of brain tumours.
- Focus your attention on the positive qualities of the participant that is sharing their story; appreciate their openness, vulnerability, and willingness to share.

Open Your Heart to Others.

- Understand the deeper meaning of the message that is being conveyed in storytelling. Refrain from the need to evaluate, over-analyze, or judge the stories of those around you.

Be Fully Engaged with The Speaker.

- The purpose of a Sharing Circle is to truly understand a person and their story. Avoid crosstalk, interrupting, or side-talking when a peer is speaking.

