Virtual Circles 101:

WHY CIRCLES?
Circles invite everyone's voice into the room by creating facilitated opportunities for people to share about their lives, think critically about course content, address community issues and repair harm. Circles help to build empathy and foster a sense of community.

STEP 1: KNOW YOUR PURPOSE: Be clear about your goals. Set intentions for the circle and design your prompt around them. (Prompts may be questions, statements, fill-in-the-blanks, etc.)

STEP 2: CLARIFY CIRCLE VALUES:
-Circles give everyone a chance to *share & listen* to one another. We will go around 1 by 1.
-We each have the *responsibility to participate, but the right to pass.*
-One voice at a time.
-Refrain from asking questions or commenting until everyone has had their turn.
-If you connect with someone's sharing you can show them with this sign from American Sign Language.

STEP 3: INTRODUCE CIRCLE PROMPT: State prompt slowly and clearly. Drop in the Chat box for participants to read.

***With your thumb pointed at yourself and your pinky toward the speaker, motion back and forth to show that you connect with what they're saying.**

STEP 4: START GO-AROUND:
    (Option 1) Ask for a Volunteer to start. Before they share their response, ask them who they are going to pass to next.
    (Option 2) Leader decides order and calls participant names one-by-one for people to share. (Can be faster, and especially helpful when group is bigger than 25.)

STEP 5: SHARE With the exception of Restorative Justice Conferences, Facilitators should always share alongside participants. (BE AWARE—a facilitator's answer may influence what others share. Going last can be strategic with certain prompts but going first can model vulnerability.)

STEP 6: RETURN TO THOSE WHO PASSED Once the prompt has gone all the way around the circle, give those who passed another chance. Tell them how important their voice is, however, DO NOT FORCE anyone to share.

STEP 7: DEBRIEF CIRCLE If time, ask a few participants "*what struck them about listening to each other's responses?*" Summarize (in one or two sentences) the take-away of the circle. Thank everyone for sharing.

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