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Celebrate HERstory:
Voices of Wisdom &
Inclusion

A collection of ideas to help you
foster the development
of women on your campus

Feminist Reading Group

Feminist Reading Group

Creating a Wisdom Circle:

Make your intentions and hopes for the group, and the fact that you will be using this format, clear to everyone invited to participate. We recommend a circle of 3-12 people, meeting monthly or more often. The number present affects length of meeting (1-3 hours). It's best to pose topics in a question form. Rather than "Let's talk about relationships," ask: "Why do relationships fall apart?" or "What can you do when one person in a relationship is changing and the other isn't?" Ask hard questions such as: "What's the most challenging thing you're facing right now?" Finish one round before you begin another question. Each person needs to feel safe from embarrassment or criticism in order to risk deep truth telling. The constants are meant to be guidelines. There's no need to be stiff or solemn.

When a wisdom circle meets regularly over an extended period of time, amazing things happen. People learn to trust the process; the circle itself becomes the teacher. Participants both receive and contribute to the group's collective wisdom. Individual visions emerge and coalesce into a shared vision.

Those initially reticent to speak find their voice. Those facile with words discover a deeper, more authentic source to speak from. You learn how to listen without judgment. Tears come as you recognize yourself in another person's story. Healing occurs when you laugh at yourself. Your body deeply relaxes when you dare to speak your truth and you feel truly heard. There is relief in knowing that you are not alone in crisis or in marking a rite of passage. And it is profoundly satisfying to see your conscious behavior within the circle translate into a healthier way of being in the world.

Preparation Time: About a month – long enough to email/call the campus community to see who might be interested in joining the group.

Duration: A feminist reading group may be a year-round venture, a summer experience, or an academic year function. Typically, the feminist reading group will meet 3 times a semester or every month and a half (this allows time for participants to read the selected text).

Number of People: Ideally, there will be a core group of 6-7 who participate each month, but having a group of about 20-30 who express interest is helpful. Each month, the organizer would invite the larger group knowing that not everyone will be able to attend and/or may not have an interest in the selected text.

Supplies Needed: GREAT BOOKS!

Location: A women's center or cozy lounge lends itself to great discussions. If you can offer tea or coffee, that's a nice bonus!



We look forward to sharing the many exciting upcoming activities, programs and initiatives as well as getting to know you!

TO JOIN SCW, PLEASE FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING PROCESS:

1. Go to <http://www.myacpa.org>
2. Enter the Member Login section of the web
3. Enter your web User Name and Password (this information was sent to you in a membership confirmation letter from ACPA)
4. On the welcome page, scroll down to the "Committees" section
5. Follow the directions given in the "To join a committee" area:
 - a) Select committee name from list of committees
 - b) Click to open committee
 - c) Click on option to join committee

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Mariama S. Boney, SCW Liaison for Membership, at boney@m@auw.org or 202-728-7612.

Thank you for sharing your interest in joining the Standing Committee for Women!

"The only thing better than education is more education."
—**Agnes E. Benedict**

"The state of the world today demands that women become less modest and dream/plan/act/risk on a larger scale." —**Charlotte Bunch**

"For what is done or learned by one class of women becomes, by virtue of their common womanhood, the property of all women." —**Elizabeth Blackwell** (*The first woman in the U.S. to become a physician*)

"The family unit plays a critical role in our society and in the training of the generation to come." —**Sandra Day O'Connor**

"We've chosen the path to equality; don't let them turn us around." —**Geraldine Ferraro** (*The first woman to be nominated as Vice President of the United States*)

"You can do one of two things; just shut up, which is something I don't find easy, or learn an awful lot very fast, which is what I tried to do." —**Jane Fonda**

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it." —**Margaret Fuller**

Thoughtful Quotes

Thoughtful Quotes to Inspire You to Inspire You

"If you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman." —**Former English Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher**

"You don't just luck into things as much as you'd like to think you do. You build step by step, whether it's friendships or opportunities." —**Former U.S. First Lady Barbara Bush**

"Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got." —**Janis Joplin**

"Something which we think is impossible now is not impossible in another decade." —**Constance Baker Motley** (*First Black woman in the U.S. to become a Federal Judge*)

"I think the key is for women not to set any limits." — **Martina Navratilova**

"Remember no one can make you feel inferior without your consent." —**Eleanor Roosevelt**

"The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn." —**Gloria Steinem**



SCW's MISSION

Women often have different needs, aspirations, and life priorities than men, particularly while pursuing a career. Women frequently have less access to employment opportunities and leadership positions in higher education. For more than twenty years, the SCW has served to examine the subtle manifestations of sexism within the ranks of ACPA, and to educate the members about sexism and its professional effects. Through round-table discussions, sponsored programs, publications, representation on ACPA boards and commissions, sponsored research projects, and networking, SCW brings women's issues to the forefront and empowers and supports women in their professional aspirations in higher education. Through education, empowerment, advocacy, and support, SCW works in collaboration with the ACPA membership at large to effect positive change for women in higher education.

Wisdom Circle

Wisdom Circle

Gathering in wisdom circles enables us to move deeply into ourselves. Into that core which continues to survive, hope, dream, and carry on. To encourage and facilitate the use of circles, Wisdom Circles has formulated a set of guidelines that we call the Ten Constants. These constants have been inspired by councils of indigenous peoples, informed by support and dialogue groups, and drawn from our own experience. The Ten Constants create a safe container that allows participants to tap their innate capacity to relate to each other in a context of wisdom and compassion.

The Ten Constants for Wisdom Circles

One: Honor the circle as sacred time and space by doing simple rituals to mark the beginning and end. A ritual creates a shared sensory experience and a demarcation from ordinary life. Light a candle, for example, or take a moment to breathe deeply. Share a brief period of silence or burn some incense or sage. Listen to a selection of evocative music or to a guided meditation. You can be as creative as you want with this.

Two: Create a collective center by mutually agreeing upon a topic or intention. This might be visioning the future, healing wounds, going within to learn more about ourselves, making decision or planning actions that

SELF-LOVE

Care for your body...

Self-love and acceptance are the ultimate acts of self-care.

GOALS

Set a goal, write it down, and release the outcome...

Small steps make a big difference.

LISTENING

Listen to your wise self...

Let your inner compass direct the course of your life.

FRIENDSHIP

Call a friend...

When you're mirrored with love, you see yourself clearly.

Remember to Remember to Take Care of Yourself Take Care of Yourself

SELF-RESPECT

Respect yourself...

You're the best judge of what's right.

CHOICE

Reconsider a commitment...

You have the right to change your mind.

INDEPENDENCE

Decide for yourself...

Exercise your right to choose.

REFLECT

Keep your eyes open...

Joy lives in small places.

sustain and enrich life for ourselves and others. A group may choose a focus specific to its needs, or it can allow for topics to surface determined by individual needs. A question is usually a useful way to frame the topic. Make a physical center in the middle of the circle.

Three: Ask to be informed by our highest human values such as compassion and truth, by the wisdom of those who have gone before us and by the needs of those yet to be born. You can also invoke mythical or historical figures that symbolize desired values. One person can speak for the group, or each person can do a personal invocation.

Four: Express gratitude for the blessings and teachings of life. Acknowledge and honor our interdependence with everything in the Web of Life. In silence, or by taking turns, give thanks for those things great and small whose gifts enrich and nourish you.

Five: Create a container for full participation and deep truth telling. Allow each person to speak without interruption or cross talk. Use a talking stick (or any object that has symbolic significance). The object may be passed around the circle or taken from and returned to the center. Respect a member's right to silence. Keep everything confidential.

Six: Listen from the heart and serve as compassionate witness for other people in the circle. To be an effective witness requires paying attention to what's being said without interpreting, judging, or trying to "fix" or rescue the person speaking. It also means a willingness to discover something about you in the stories of other people.

Gathering of Elders

Gathering of Elders

Seven: Speak from the heart and from direct experience. When you are moved to speak, do so thoughtfully and with care. Avoid abstract, conceptual language, and stay in touch as much as possible with your feelings. As this capacity develops, you may be moved to share those feelings and to say difficult things without self-judgment and without blaming others.

Eight: Make room for silence to enter to allow for reflection, for meditation, for feelings to surface and for a sense of the sacred to emerge as the group proceeds.

Nine: Empower each member to be a co-facilitator of the process. If possible, designate a different person to be the circle-maker each time. This person readies the physical setting, initiates the opening and closing rituals and facilitates consensus on a topic. Encourage each other to give voice to feelings of satisfaction or discomfort with the group's process.

Ten: Commit to an ongoing relationship with each person in the circle so as to engender trust and caring among members. Extend that caring to other people, to the Earth and all her creatures by practicing capacities developed within the wisdom circle in daily life.

Purpose for Wisdom Circles:

The wisdom circle serves many purposes. It is a place for individuals to practice heart-to-heart communication skills, to heal the wounds of loss, illness and abuse, to find the courage to act upon that “still small voice within,” to empower our best selves. Here we can share a vision,

Materials: Microphones if needed; chairs in a circle, if possible.

Purpose: To share oral histories related to community development and service between generations. Create a list of prominent and diverse community elders, defined as “Those with gray hair.” Alter the definition to fit your community needs. Determine a set of three to five elders and start or continue a relationship with them. Invite them to speak to the group on your designated day and time. Share some information with the elders about the student audience and the goals for the program. Arrange for transportation, accessibility and other needs to be met. Invite the elders to meet with a small group of students at lunch or dinner prior to the event. If the meal is in a dining hall, it might help the elders to reminisce about college life, or introduce a portion of college life to the elders. This will also allow some of the students to have the pleasure of meeting the elders one on one. Casual conversation is often where wonderful exchanges take shape. At the event, pass out a program with a short biography and photo of each elder. Introduce each elder and ask the following questions:

- How do you define community?
- What communities have you contributed to during your lifetime and how has this shaped your perspective?
- What expectations do you have for young people regarding community service and civic engagement?
- How does understanding one's own identity play a part in serving a community?

Allow for plenty of time for question and answer and for an exchange to take place. If there is time, split the participants into small groups, each group containing an elder. Allow for inter-generational dialogue. After the date, send thank you notes to the elders.

Brief Description: A feminist reading group is a great way to connect with women across campus and have meaningful discussions about feminist books and issues. It also helps women learn who their allies and support networks are across campus.

In starting a feminist reading group, the first step would be to find a few other women on your campus that might be interested. **START TALKING!** This small group could select the first text and then email all the women on your campus that you think might be interested and to the general faculty and staff lists. Let people know of the reading group and invite them to participate in the first session. Set the date and read away!

Once you get the group together, you all might brainstorm some books that you want to read. (You might need to think about the cost of hardback vs. paperback.) Some ideas to consider in this brainstorming: do you have faculty how have written books you might want to read and mixing scholarly books with popular books.

Key to a Successful Reading Group: GREAT BOOKS!

discover a mission. Here we can acknowledge historical violence and heal the wounds we carry, and create a feeling of community. This format is also valuable to any group that is seeking to improve its communication and cohesion, to create common ground, to clarify purpose and to recommit to a mission. A wisdom circle is also a place to hear opposing views, reconcile differences and find, or offer, forgiveness. It is also a practice arena for the way we want to be in the world.

The wisdom circle format has a sacred purpose: it allows us to merge our efforts to bring Spirit into our lives. A wisdom circle can become a place for separating from the ordinary, and for honoring each person's wisdom. The simple rituals used in wisdom circles can guide participants to a sense of the sacred, that is, to a deeper relationship with self, with others, and to the Source of Life. By its nature, the circle teaches us that each point on the circle is related to all of the others, and that each one is to be valued equally. Listening can become a collective spiritual practice where the person speaking becomes a focus of meditation.

Listening is also a way to welcome people you feel are different from you into your heart. Factors such as your personal experience with groups, psychological defenses, current life issues, gender, age, race, ethnicity, and economic status can all affect how comfortable you feel in circle. Part of the group's work includes helping each member feel safe and valued enough to participate authentically.