

Chapter 1 CIRCLE OF LIFE



OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. Explain that the Circle of Life (the Medicine Wheel) is a traditional Native symbol.
2. Identify the four parts of the Circle of Life.
3. Identify examples for each part of the Circle of Life.
4. Explain that all four parts of the Circle must be strong for a person to be healthy.
5. Explain that volition is a person's power to make decisions for the things they believe in.

OVERVIEW OF ONLINE MATERIAL



The Circle of Life is introduced as a Native symbol, the Medicine Wheel. Circles are found in many parts of life: the earth rotating around the sun, seasons, nests, how buffalo protect their young, etc. The Circle is also symbolic of the wholeness of a person. Within each person there are 4 parts: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. When each of these parts is strong a person's circle is balanced.

Each person has the power within them to make decisions. That power is called Volition. Volition can be thought of as will power. We have the choice to use our volition to make wise decisions but sometimes we give in to peer pressure and do things that we know are not right. It takes courage, but we can exercise volition to can make wise decisions that strengthen the areas of our circle of life.

LESSON OVERVIEW



ACTIVITIES

1. WARM UP ACTIVITY (5 min.)
2. DISCUSS ONLINE PROGRAM (5-10 min.)
3. ESTABLISH BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES (10 min.)
4. POWER OF THE CIRCLE (Discussion) (10 min.)
5. THE PARTS OF THE CIRCLE OF LIFE (Game) (15 min.)
6. WHAT MAKES UP MY CIRCLE OF LIFE (Craft) (20 min.)



MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A ball (something round that can be tossed)
2. Black Elk reading *
3. Poster paper or white board
4. 16 game cards*
5. Tape
6. Markers
7. Leader discussion sheet*
8. Paper for each participant (if possible printed with a medicine wheel)
9. Magazines with pictures that can be cut out
10. Scissors
11. A top

* located at the end of the lesson plans



PREPARATION

Activity 3: Print copies of the Black Elk reading.

Activity 4: Print and cut out game cards. Review the leader discussion sheet.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

Volition

This chapter introduces the word **Volition**. A person's volition is their personal power to make decisions. Although the COL program focuses on using volition to make wise decisions, a person can also use their volition to make poor decisions. People can learn from their mistakes.

CHAPTER 1 LESSON PLAN



ACTIVITY 1: WARM UP (5 min.)

Purpose: To help youth settle down and transition to class time.

Materials: A ball.

Preparation: Identify a space for students to stand in a circle.

Instructions:

Have youth stand in a circle.

Explain: The person with the ball will toss to someone. When that person gets it they must say the first thing they can think of that is in the shape of a circle.

Keep going until everyone has had a turn.



ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSS THE ONLINE PROGRAM (5-10 min.)

Purpose: To get youth's impressions of the online material and to address the reason why *Circle of Life* uses different versions of the medicine wheel.

Instructions:

Ask: What did you think of the online program?

Explain: If comments or questions come up about seeing different and unfamiliar orientations of the medicine wheel, you can explain that the Medicine Wheel is a symbol that is used by many tribes. Tribes draw the wheel different ways. Some of the things that can be different are the colors, the location of the colors, the order of the parts, and whether the lines are drawn straight or diagonally.

ASK:

- What version of the Medicine Wheel are you most familiar with?
- Have you seen other ways that the Medicine Wheel is drawn?

Explain: When you see the medicine wheel in the program, don't get hung up if it does not look like what you are used to. Instead, just think about the medicine wheel the way you are used to it. What is most important is what the medicine wheel teaches not how it looks.



ACTIVITY 3: ESTABLISH BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES (10 min.)

Purpose: To create an environment where there is mutual respect and trust so that youth feel comfortable sharing and learning.

Materials: Large piece of paper or a white board and markers.

Preparation: Place large piece of paper (or white board) in front of the class room.

Instructions:

Ask: Who can share a rule for how everyone should act when we meet?

Write rules: Discuss suggestions and write rules that everyone agrees on a large piece of paper.

Ask the group to commit to following the rules.

Post the rules and refer to them later as needed.

Examples of rules include: not talking when some else is talking, raising you hand if you want to talk, not making fun or someone else or what they say, etc.



ACTIVITY 4: THE POWER OF THE CIRCLE (10 min.)

NOTE: You can adapt this activity by substituting a different reading, story, song or poem that expresses the meaning of the circle.

Purpose: To reinforce the traditional Native American concept and symbol of the circle.

Materials: Black Elk reading (below)

Preparation: Print copies of the Black Elk reading.

Instructions:

1. Describe Black Elk:

Black Elk was a respected Sioux leader, who lived from 1863-1950. Today, many of his words are used to teach others about important Native ideas and traditions. Black Elk often spoke about the circle and its meaning.

2. Read Black Elk’s words:

“Everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles. Everything tries to be round . . .The sky is round . . . the earth is round like a ball, and so are the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles . . . Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back to where they were. The life of a man is in a circle from childhood to adulthood, and so it is in everything where power moves.”

3. Discuss Black Elk’s words

Discuss: Black Elk’s examples: the four seasons go from one to another in an endless circle; the earth is round and also keeps making a circle around the sun; the moon circles around the earth, etc.

Ask: Can anyone think of an example of how the circle is used in traditional or modern Native American culture? *Examples: most tribal dancing is done in a circle, hoops.*



ACTIVITY 5: THE PARTS OF THE CIRCLE OF LIFE (15 min.)

Purpose: To reinforce youths' understanding of the Circle of Life and its four parts—mental, physical, emotional and spiritual.

Materials: A large sheet of paper or white board to write on, 16 game cards (found at the end of the lesson), tape, markers, and leader discussion sheet.

Preparation: Cut out the game cards. Review the leader discussion sheet.

Instructions:

1. Draw a large circle and divide it into 4 quadrants. Label the quadrants: emotional, spiritual, physical and mental).

Ask: How would you define each of the areas of the circle?

Examples—

- *Mental=using your mind, learning.*
- *Spiritual=respecting and honoring your family, your community and yourself.*
- *Emotional=your feelings.*
- *Physical=your body.*

2. Write the words “Healthy Person” around the outside of the circle.

Explain: Each person is made up of four parts. For someone to be truly happy each part needs to be healthy. Not just one part.

3. Put the cards into a bag (or lay out on a table) and have youth take one (or more depending on group size). Have each youth read their card and tape it on the area of the Circle of Life where it belongs.

Explain: Some activities can fit in more than one area. There can be more than one right answer.

For example: Dancing can involve Mental (thinking about what you are doing), Physical (movement), Emotional (enjoyment), and Spiritual (respecting and honoring your culture and community).

4. **Ask:** Can you think of other things that could fit into each quadrant. Use the leader discussion sheet for additional ideas.



ACTIVITY 6: WHAT MAKES UP MY CIRCLE OF LIFE? (20 min.)

Purpose: To emphasize that a healthy person is strong in all areas of their Circle.

Materials: Top, paper, markers, and magazines.

Preparation: Use the Circle of Life from the previous activity

Instructions:

1. **Explain:** a healthy person is strong in all areas of their circle:

- A strong mental part makes you smarter.
- A strong physical part makes your body healthy.
- A strong emotional part makes you happy.
- A strong spiritual part helps you respect yourself and the world around you.

2. **Ask:** What would it be like if you did things in only one area like eating, sleeping and running but not the other areas?

Answer: Your physical part would be very strong but your mental, emotional and spiritual parts would suffer.



Optional: Use a top to illustrate the idea of balance. The top will only spin well when all parts are the same size and it is balanced.

3. **Creative activity:** Pass out paper with Circle of Life to each youth. For each section have youth draw pictures (or symbols), glue pictures from magazines or write words to show things they do to be strong in that area. Have youth share their completed circles.

4. **Wrap Up:** After youth share their circles, remind them that a healthy person is someone who is strong in all areas of their Circle of Life. Point out that each person's circle looks different because each person is different and has their own unique characteristics. It is important for each person to do the things that strengthen the parts of their circle in their own way.

What Makes Up My Own Circle of Life? Cards to Print

| | |
|---|---|
|  <p>Use my brain</p> | <p>Exercise a lot</p>  |
| <p>Learn to read and write well</p>  |  <p>Eat healthy foods</p> |
|  <p>Think before I do</p> | <p>Get plenty of rest</p>  |
| <p>Think about smart ways to take care of myself</p> |  <p>Protect my body from disease</p> |
|  <p>Talk about my feelings</p> | <p><i>Respect</i> Respect myself</p> |
| <p>Feel happy about who I am</p>  | <p>Respect Mother Earth</p>  |
| <p>Don't make fun of other people's feelings</p> |  <p>Wonder about who made us</p> |
|  <p>Care about other people</p> |  <p>Be proud of what I do</p> |

Activity #5

Leader Discussion Sheet

(Activity #5)

Mental



Use your brain to learn. Learning is very important. Your community needs you to be as smart as you can. Do your very best in school. That way you can help the community stay strong.

- Read and study hard. Share what you learn with other people.
- Remember the wisdom of your elders. Try to learn as much as you can so that you can become wise.
- Remember, you are always smarter than you think. So try harder. Study more. Don't let difficulties stop you. **CHALLENGE YOUR MIND!**

Physical



Be careful around things that might have germs — like garbage or animal poop or other people's blood. Don't touch them!

Eat healthy foods every day. Don't eat too much. Too much food is not good for your body.

- Get lots of exercise every day. Take walks. Run. Swim. Play sports. Stretch your muscles. Breathe in lots of good air.
- Get lots of sleep every night. Your body needs to rest after a long day.
- Take good care of your body. Learn about diseases so you know how to avoid them. Don't do drugs, don't drink alcohol.

Emotional



It's OK to have strong feelings. Most of the time people feel happy, but everybody gets sad sometimes. Learn to talk about how you feel. You can talk about your feelings to people that you trust. Talking about feelings helps you understand them better. And, understanding your feelings helps make sure you don't do dangerous or foolish things when you're feeling unsure.

- Learn to be a good listener. Listen carefully when other people tell you about their feelings. Try to help people if they seem to need it. Sometimes, all somebody needs is a pat on the shoulder.
- Other people may be sad or unhappy. Don't make fun of them. They have feelings too, even if they are different from you.

Spiritual



Respect and honor your family and your community. Be proud that you are American Indian or Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian. Learn the traditions of your culture.

Learn the dances and songs, the arts, the language and the ceremonies of your people. These things are yours to keep. They are yours to pass on to the next generation.

- Respect yourself. Be proud of who you are.
- Be proud of the things that you do well. Work hard to become better at other things. Be proud of yourself for doing smart and healthy things. Don't let people make you do things that you know are not right.
- Show respect for other people. Don't tease or hurt other people because they are different from you. Try to help the sick, the elderly, and others who need it.

NOTE: remember that during these discussions, you need to emphasize the interconnectedness of the four parts, giving examples of how we're usually tapping several, if not all, of our parts, in any given thing we do. (see example cited in Activity instructions.)