Planning sessions

Adolescents benefit from space for creativity and fun, balanced by structure and routine as they are learning, playing and working together. Knowing what to expect, and what will be expected of them, helps them to focus and engage in activities, interact positively with each other, and feel confident and ready to take on challenges such as sharing their ideas or trying new skills. To make adolescents’ activity time supportive, safe and helpful, facilitators should plan it with a consistent sequence of steps, so that every session includes opportunities for adolescents to work independently, connect with others in their Circle and share their progress. These session steps should also include processes for facilitators to learn about each adolescent participant in a Circle, and to monitor and assess the entire Adolescent Circle’s progress as the adolescents participate in programmes or interventions and pursue their goals together. ***[Insert icon for Provide structure, routine and support.].***

## What is a session?

A session is the period of time when an Adolescent Circle meets and participates in activities together. A session should follow a set of steps that is used routinely each time a Circle meets. In this guidance, eight steps are recommended.

Sessions and steps should be adapted to each Circle’s particular needs. The duration and structure of sessions and session steps may change as adolescents work on different activities and phases together.

**How long should a session last?**

A session should usually last between one to two hours. For adolescents the ‘Starting our Circle’ or ‘Knowing Ourselves’ phases – which may include younger adolescents, or adolescents adjusting to a new context or environment – shorter sessions may be more appropriate for their attention span. Adolescents in the ‘Connecting’ or ’Take Action’ phase may prefer longer sessions that give them an opportunity to work together on activities that require more time or discussion. Session times may also be adjusted to accommodate adolescents’ daily routines and responsibilities. For example, adolescents with other important responsibilities such as work, domestic chores, or studies may not have time to participate in long activity sessions. (See **Investigate Adolescents Situations** for strategies to understand and adjust programmes and interventions so that they are accessible for adolescents, especially those hardest to reach).

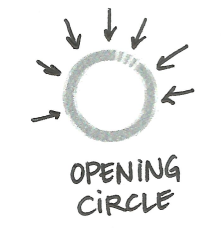
**Planning a session: Eight session steps**

Facilitators can use the following eight steps to plan a session for adolescents, adapting each step to your specific context and program. Eight steps may sound like a lot to include in one or two hours, but some steps take just a few minutes, while others – especially the Challenge step, which is the main activity of any session – take up most of the session time.

Each of the steps serves an important purpose for the Adolescent Circle. As you start to plan sessions, understand how each step might work and how it might be helpful.

Prepare to adapt the steps to adolescents’ interests and contexts, especially with respect to timing. As noted above, for adolescents in the ‘Starting our Circle’ and ‘Knowing Ourselves’ phases, shorter steps may be more appropriate; whereas adolescents in the ‘Connecting’ and ‘Take Action’ phases may want more time for the last few steps. Be flexible – follow the routine created by the steps, but do not stick to it rigidly, if doing so makes activities less interesting or more limiting for adolescents. If you will not be including all eight steps, consider how you can achieve the same goals with different processes.

***[To Matter of Form: Design new icons for each session step to replace the indicative ones included in this document.]***

 **1. Opening Circle**

The Opening Circle is practiced at the beginning of each session and makes everyone feel welcome as they start their session together. It should be simple and easy, and give all adolescents in the Circle a chance to participate equally and actively. Opening Circles often involve physical activity to help adolescents feel alert and energized. Some Circles prefer to hold the same Opening Circle at the beginning of every session to provide a sense of ritual and predictability.

**Timeframe:** 5 minutes (more if the adolescents want it to take longer)

**Examples:**

* a song
* a chant
* a dance
* a name game
* an exercise routine
* anything else fun, simple, energizing and welcoming.

**[Insert new icon for remind and refresh] 2. Remind and Refresh**

During the Remind and Refresh step, adolescents review what they learned in the previous session. This includes discussing what activities they did in the previous session.

**Timeframe:** 5 to 10 minutes, depending on whether a thorough review and update is necessary

**Examples:**

* Adolescents share memories from the last session, including enjoyable moments, special achievements of adolescents in the Circle, or important things they learned.
* One adolescent can role-play the character of a ‘reporter,’ interviewing adolescents about what they remember or learned in the last session.
* Adolescent Circles working together on long-term projects (such the Taking Action cycle) review any progress they have made in their last sessions, and update Circle members who have missed sessions.

**3. Warm-Up**

The Warm-Up is a short activity at the start of the session. The warm-up activity should engage participants in either energetic or quiet activities. The warm-up should be simple and easy for participants to follow.

**Timeframe:** 10-15 minutes

**Examples:**

* **Energizers – short, simple games -** can be used in the warm-up step to bring participants together in a fun and engaging way. See the Energizers in the Activity Box for ideas!

**4. Explanation and Discussion**

The Explanation and Discussion step is a moment of transition between the Warm-Up and the Challenge steps. Adolescents discuss what they experienced and learned during the Warm-Up, and the facilitator explains what the adolescents will do during the Challenge step, which is the main activity of each session.

The Explanation and Discussion step involves more talking than action.It should be adapted to adolescents’ interests and attention spans. Do not push adolescents to sit, talk and listen for a long time, especially if this will stifle their energy after the Warm-Up activity. Give adolescents enough time to understand what they will be doing during the Challenge step, and a chance to ask questions if they need more clarification.

**Timeframe:** 5-10 minutes

**Examples:**

Summarize what was learned in the Warm-Up activity then provide instructions for the Challenge activity. (Most Activity Cards begin with these instructions).

**5. Challenge**

The Challenge step is the main activity of each session. It usually takes up the majority of adolescents’ time in any session.

The Challenge step can be a simple activity that adolescents carry out and complete during one session. The Challenge step can be used to practice a skill they learned in a previous session, or to continue an individual or group project that they work on over the course of several sessions. For those that are in the ‘Starting our Circle’ and ‘Knowing Ourselves’ phases, the Challenge step might be different every day. Adolescents in the ‘Knowing Ourselves’ cycle might use the Challenge step to work on drawings, collages, or other individual projects they started in an earlier session. Adolescents working on group projects in the ‘Taking Action cycle’ can use the Challenge step to plan and work together.

**Timeframe:** 20 – 60 minutes, or longer

**Examples:**

* The Activity Box provides 50 activities that can be used for the Challenge step in sessions for adolescents in the four activity phases.
* For adolescents in the ‘Starting our Circle’ phase, the Energizer Cards also give ideas for simple, fun activities for this step.
* Facilitators and adolescents who are ready for a new kind of challenge can also use the Inspiration Cards for ideas for activities to try together.
* Facilitators can also adapt or improvise new activities based on all of the guides and cards in the Activity Box, or use the Activity Template to create new ideas.

**6. Sharing and Take Away**

The Sharing and Take Away step is a time for adolescents to share what they have done during the Challenge step with others in their Circle and show, write or draw what they have *taken away* from their time together.

This step provides facilitators with a valuable chance to assess adolescents’ learning and progress toward their goals. It may be helpful to hold longer, more in-depth Sharing and Take Away discussions or learning assessments every few sessions instead of or in addition to at each session. The Sharing and Take Away step can be connected with the Review step, which can also be helpful for adolescents who have already been working together as a group.

**Timeframe:** 10-20 minutes, or longer if needed for more in-depth sharing and feedback

**Examples:**

If adolescents are working on individual projects, they can look at each other’s work and share feedback using the **Gallery walk** tool. If they have been doing activities in small groups, they can tell each other what they did and compare experiences.

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**7. Review**

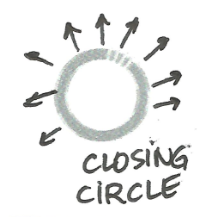
During the Review step, adolescents share their feelings and opinions about the whole session. This is a chance for facilitators check whether adolescents are enjoying the sessions, and whether adolescents feel that the sessions are helping to make progress toward their goals. ***[Insert icon for Talk with adolescents and listen.]***

As with the Sharing and Take Away step, some Circles may want to take extra time for a more in-depth review process every few sessions, instead of or in addition to including it as a step in each session. The **Reviewing progress toward group goals** activity can be useful for this. The **Reviewing group rules** activity also helps adolescents to discuss what they can do to make sessions more fun and rewarding.

**Timeframe:** 5 minutes, unless adolescents want more time

**Examples:**

* Ask adolescents to show how much did or did not enjoy a session by standing on a real or imaginary line that reaches from one end of the space to the other. One end of the line should represent ‘100% enjoyment’ and the other should represent ‘0% enjoyment.’
* Ask adolescents to share a one word description of how a session made them feel, either verbally or in writing.
* Adolescents can use the **Emotion Cube** to show how they feel at the end of the session.



**8. Closing Circle**

The Closing Circle is practiced at the end of every session. It brings adolescents together to close their time together. It reminds all of the adolescents that they are equal and important members of the Circle, and that their participation in the day’s session was important.

A closing ritual can be a song, a chant, a dance, a game, an exercise routine, or anything else fun, energizing and welcoming. It should be the same every day. Adolescents can invent their own closing circle ritual, and change it whenever they want. Some adolescents may prefer to have the same activity for both the Opening and Closing Circle.

**Timeframe:** 5 minutes

**Example:**

Adolescents create a closing circle song and sing it at the end of every session.

## Step-by-step: Planning sessions for different Activity Phases

The section provides step-by-step guides for facilitators to plan sessions for adolescents in each of the four Activity Phases. (See the **Planning Activity Phases** section of the guidance.) Use these guides to developing session plans that will work well for adolescents with different needs, capabilities and interests. Choose and use the guide that is appropriate for the Adolescent Circle with which you are working.

**[Jason and MoF- I am having trouble with the formatting of this document, please work with me so I can help to insert headers]**

| **Step No.** | **Step** | **Timeframe** | **Aim: Through this step adolescents will:** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** |  | 5 minutes | Feel welcome to join the group  Understand that the Circle is beginning  Feel engaged and active, using their voices and movement. | Perform a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony that will be used at the beginning of every session.  **Tip:** Even in a newly formed Circle, adolescents can suggest or invent their own opening ritual. |
| **2** | **[Remind and refresh]** | 10 minutes | Express how they are feeling at the moment  Share their Take Away from the previous session, including important ideas or experiences  Refresh their memories about what happened in the previous session  Receive an update on what happened previously if they missed a session | Ask the adolescents to volunteer their feelings, opinions and descriptions of the previous session.  **Tip:** Use reporter games or other activities to make the review more fun. |
| **3** |  | 10 minutes | Participate in a simple, short game or other fun activity that challenges them to try something new  Interact with one or two other adolescents in the Circle | Use a simple game in which adolescents interact with each other. This game can be a simplified version of the Challenge activity that they do later in the session.  It is okay to repeat an activity that has been used before, as long as a wide range of activities are used. |
| **4** |  | 5-10 minutes | Explore and explain what they learned or experienced through the activity  Understand how this connects to other themes they will explore during the session | Bring the adolescents back into a circle. Ask them to share what they experienced in the Warm-Up, what they learned and how they felt. |
| **5** |  | 20-30 minutes | Participate in a longer game or activity that challenges them to try something new  Have time and freedom to focus, have fun and be involved in the moment during the activity | Adolescents play a game or work on activities individually (e.g. drawings), or in groups of any size. This can be a new game, or one the adolescents have played before.  Use **Activity Guides** for **Challenge** (and **Sharing and Take away)** steps. |
| **6** | **(create Icon for sharing and take away)** | 10 -15 minutes | Come back together as a group and quiet down  Share what they have developed/produced during the Challenge (e.g. present a collage or a drawing)  Acknowledge each other’s efforts or achievements  Discuss important things they learned or experienced  Discuss how they will tell others in their community about the days’ activities, and encourage other adolescents to get involved | Bring the adolescents back together. Ask them to share or present what they did during the activity, and/or to share positive feedback about what they saw others in the group do or achieve.  Keep the adolescents together in their group. Ask them to share important things they learned or experienced.  **Tip:** The facilitator or the adolescents can make notes or drawings to highlight important points, and display them in future sessions. |
| **7** |  | 5 minutes | Share their opinions about the session | Give the adolescents a chance to share their opinions about the session, and their feelings or moods as the session ends.  **Tip:** This session can be combined with the Take Away to avoid making the discussion too long or slow. |
| **8** |  | 5-10 minutes | Understand that the session is ending  Say goodbye to each other for the day  Feel that their participation was important to the rest of the Circle | Perform a special song, dance, hand clap or other type of ceremony that will be used at the end of every session. This can be the same as or different from the ritual at the beginning of the session.  **Tip:** Even in a newly formed Circle, adolescents can suggest or invent their own closing ritual. |

| **Step No.** | **Step Title** | **Timeframe** | **Aim: Through this step adolescents will:** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** |  | 5 minutes | Feel welcome to join the group  Understand that the Circle is beginning  Feel engaged and active, using their voices and movement  Feel a sense of continuity and reassurance from their work together in previous phases | Continue to use a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony at the beginning of every session. The adolescents can continue to use a ritual they have used in a previous session, or start a new one. |
| **2** | **[Remind and refresh]** | 10 minutes | Express how they are feeling  Share their Take Away from the previous session, including important ideas or experiences  Refresh their memories about what happened in the previous session  Receive an update on what happened previously if they missed a session | Ask the adolescents to volunteer their feelings about, opinions on and descriptions of the previous session. |
| **3** |  | 10 minutes | Participate in a simple, short game or other fun activity that challenges them to try something new  Interact with one or two other adolescents in the Circle | Use simple games where adolescents interact with each other in pairs or groups of three.  **Tip:** Use the Warm-Up to balance the Challenge activity. If there will be a high-energy Challenge, the Warm-Up can be quiet. If the Challenge will be an individual activity, the Warm-Up can be a group activity. |
| 4 |  | 5-10 minutes | Explore and explain what they learned or experienced through the activity  Understand how this connects to other themes they will explore during the session | Bring the adolescents back into a Circle. Ask them to share what they experienced in the Warm-Up, what they learned and how they felt. |
| **5** |  | 20-30 minutes | Participate in a longer game or activity that challenges them to try something new  Have time and freedom to focus, have fun and be involved in the moment during the activity | Adolescents play a game or work on activities individually (e.g. drawings), or in groups of any size. This can be a new game, or one the adolescents have played before.  **Tip:** As this phase encourages adolescents to learn more about themselves, choose activities that allow them to explore and express their ideas in different ways. |
| **6** | New Icon for sharing and Takeaway | 10-15 minutes | Come back together as a group and quiet down  Share what they have developed/produced during the Challenge (e.g. present a collage or a drawing)  Acknowledge each other’s efforts or achievements  Discuss important things they learned or experienced  Discuss how they will tell others in their community about the days’ activities, and encourage other adolescents to get involved | Bring the adolescents back together. Ask them to share or present what they did during the activity, and/or to share positive feedback about what they saw others in the group do or achieve  **Tip:** If the adolescents made or wrote something, consider displaying it (with their permission). If it is something they are proud of, discuss how they can keep it safe for others to see.  Keep the adolescents together in their group. Ask them to share important things they learned or experienced.  **Tip:** The facilitator or the adolescents can make notes or drawings to highlight important points, and display them in other sessions. |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| **7** |  | 5 minutes | Share their opinions about the session | Give the adolescents a chance to share their opinions about the session, and their feelings or mood as the session ends.  **Tip:** This session can be combined with the Take-Away step to avoid making the discussion too long or slow. |
| **8** |  | 5-10 minutes | Understand that the session is ending  Say goodbye to each other for the day  Feel that their participation was important to the rest of the Circle | Perform a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony that will be used at the end of every session. This can be the same as or different from the ritual at the beginning of the session.  **Tip:** Even in a newly formed Circle, adolescents can suggest or invent their own closing ritual. |

**Step-by-Step: Guide for Connecting phase**

The guide below provides suggested activities for adolescents in the Connecting phase. Sessions should follow the same basic structure as other phases, but with more flexibility.

| **Step No.** | **Step Title** | **Timeframe** | **Aim: Through this step adolescents will:** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** |  | 5 minutes | Feel welcome to join the group  Understand that the Circle is beginning.  Feel engaged and active, using their voices and movement  Feel a sense of continuity and reassurance from their work together in previous phases | Continue to use a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony at the beginning of every session. The adolescents can continue to use a ritual they have used in a previous session, or start a new one. |
| **2** | **[Remind and refresh]** | 10 minutes | Express how they are feeling  Share their Take-Away from the previous session, including important ideas or experiences  Refresh their memories about what happened in the previous session  Receive an update on what happened previously if they missed a session | Ask the adolescents to volunteer their feelings, opinions and descriptions of the previous session.  **Tip:** If it looks like the adolescents want to continue working on an activity that they started in a previous session, this is a good time to ask them about it. |
| **3** |  | 10 minutes | Participate in a simple, short game or other fun activity that challenges them to try something new  Interact with one or two other adolescents in the Circle | Use simple games where adolescents interact with each other in pairs or groups of three.  **Tip:** Use the Warm-Up to balance the Challenge activity. If there will be a high-energy Challenge, the Warm-Up can be quiet. If the Challenge will be an individual activity, the Warm-Up can be a group activity. |
| **4** |  | 5-10 minutes | Explore and explain what they learned or experienced through the activity  Understand how this connects to other themes they will explore during the session | Bring the adolescents back into a Circle. Ask them to share what they experienced in the Warm-Up, what they learned and how they felt. |
| **5** |  | 20-60 minutes | Participate in a longer game or activity that challenges them to practice new skills, interact with each other and explore beyond their activity space  Have time and freedom to focus on and experience an activity in more depth  Possibly move outside the space to explore and gather information | Adolescents play a game or work on activities in groups of any size. If they will be going outside their usual space, discuss where they will go and what they will do.  This Challenge step might be part of a long-term activity or project. For example, if adolescents are mapping their community, they might gather information about their community in one session, and then draw their map in the next one. |
| **6** | **New icon for sharing and takeaway** | 10-15 minutes | Come back together as a group and quiet down  Share what they have learned or created during the Challenge step  Acknowledge each other’s efforts or achievements  Discuss important things they learned or experienced  Brainstorm ideas of how they can build on their work in a following session, if they want to  Discuss how they will tell others in their community about the days’ activities, and encourage other adolescents to get involved | Bring the adolescents back together. Ask them to share or present what they did during the Challenge, highlighting what they find most important or interesting. Encourage warm feedback from the rest of the group for each other’s work.  **Tip:** If the adolescents are working on an ongoing project, help them to preserve their work for the next session.  Keep the adolescents together in their group. Ask them to share important things they learned or experienced.  **Tip:** The facilitator or the adolescents can make notes or drawings to highlight important points, and display them in other sessions. |
| **7** |  | 5 minutes | Share their opinions about the session | Give the adolescents a chance to share their opinions about the session, and their feelings or mood as the session ends.  **Tip:** This session can be combined with the Take-Away to avoid making the discussion too long or slow. |
| **8** |  | 5-10 minutes | Understand that the session is ending  Say goodbye to each other for the day  Feel that their participation for the day was important to the rest of the Circle | Perform a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony that will be used at the end of every session. This can be the same as or different from the ritual at the beginning of the session.  **Tip:** Even in a newly formed Circle, adolescents can suggest or invent their own closing ritual. |

**Stepby-Step: Planning and facilitating a session in the Taking Action phase.**

The guide below provides suggested activities for adolescents in the Taking Action phase. Sessions should follow the same basic structure as other phases, but with more flexibility. Adolescents may facilitate some or all the sessions.

| **Step No.** | **Step Title** | **Timeframe** | **Aim: Through this step adolescents will:** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 |  | 5 minutes | Feel welcome to join the group  Understand that the Circle is beginning  Feel engaged and active, using their voices and movement  Feel a sense of continuity and reassurance from their work together in previous phases | Continue to use a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony at the beginning of every session. The adolescents can continue to use a ritual they have used in a previous session, or start a new one. |
| 2 | **[Remind and refresh]** | 10 minutes | Express how they are feeling at the moment  Share their Take-Away from the previous session, including important ideas or experiences  Refresh their memories about what happened in the previous session, and check progress on their plans  Receive an update on what happened previously if they missed a session | Ask the adolescents to volunteer their feelings about, opinions on and descriptions of the previous session.  Ask the adolescents to check on their own progress against their project plans.  **Tip**: It may be helpful for the adolescents to keep written steps and timelines for their projects on chart paper. |
| 3 |  | 10 minutes | Participate in a simple, short game or other fun activity that challenges them to try something new  Interact with one or two other adolescents in the Circle. | Use simple games in which adolescents interact with each other in pairs or groups of three.  **Tip:** Encourage the adolescents to take turns leading a Warm-Up activity. They can even experiment by designing their own Warm-Ups. |
| 4 |  | 5-10 minutes | Explore and explain what they learned or experienced through the activity | Bring the adolescents back into a circle. Ask them to share what they experienced in the Warm-Up, what they learned and how they felt. |
| 5 |  | 20-60 minutes | Work on different steps of a long-term project that they plan and carry out over the course of several sessions | Give adolescents the opportunity to work on a project of their own design over the course of several sessions. This will include deciding their goal, agreeing to a project idea, planning steps and roles, and carrying out the project itself. |
| 6 |  | 10-15 minutes | Come back together as a group  Share what they have learned or created during the Challenge step  Acknowledge each other’s efforts or achievements  Reflect on progress on their project | Bring the adolescents back together. Ask them to share or present what they did during the Challenge step, highlighting what they find most important or interesting. Encourage warm feedback from the rest of the group for each other’s work.  **Tip:** If the adolescents are working on an ongoing project, help them to keep and preserve their work for the next session.  Keep the adolescents together in their group. Ask them to share important things they learned and experienced while working on their projects.  **Tip:** The facilitator or the adolescents can make notes or drawings to highlight important points, and display them in other sessions. |
| 8 |  | 5 minutes | Share their opinions about the session | Give the adolescents a chance to share their opinions about the session, and their feelings or mood as the session ends.  **Tip:** This session can be combined with the Take-Away to avoid making the discussion too long or slow. |
| 9 |  | 5-10 minutes | Understand that the session is ending  Say goodbye to each other for the day  Feel that their participation for the day was noticed by and important to the rest of the circle | Perform a special song, dance, handclap or other type of ceremony that will be used at the end of every session. This can be the same as or different from the ritual at the beginning of the session.  **Tip:** Even in a newly formed Circle, adolescents can suggest or invent their own closing ritual. |