**Section 4: What are the Four Activity Phases?**

Different adolescents have different needs, capacities, and interests. Some adolescents enjoy participating in simple, creative activities and games – perhaps because they are younger and not ready or interested to carry out complex tasks, or perhaps because they enjoy taking a break from challenging circumstances or heavy and adult responsibilities that take up most of their time. Other adolescents may be motivated and ready to plan and carry out projects together, even projects with ambitious and serious goals - because they are more mature and find such challenges more interesting, and because they feel ready to pursue their own goals and have a role in shaping their communities.

Adolescents’ contexts and circumstances can also be important factors in how they enjoy participating in activities together. Adolescents who have newly- arrived to a community or are in a context that is changing or in flux may not know their peers and may not feel comfortable working together, or may not be able to participate in activities on a regular basis – even if they would like to do so. Those who have been in the same community for some time – even if they are in a protracted humanitarian context with uncertain prospects for long-term settlement or resettlement – may have formed strong working relationships with peers, and in some cases may have time and energy that they would like to put toward tasks that they find meaningful.

### Overview: What are the Four Phases?

This section of the Facilitators’ Guidance outlines a process for facilitators to plan sequences of activity sessions with and for adolescents through four phases - flexible modules, with sequences of sessions and activities that facilitators and adolescents (when ready) plan together. Using phases instead of pre-planned modules enables facilitators to adapt activities and sessions to the developmental level and circumstances of each group of adolescents, and, more importantly, to adolescents’ own goals for the time they spend together in sessions. The Four Phases range from simple sequences of sessions with varied fun and restful activities in each, to complex sequences that involve adolescents working together on tasks or projects that they carry out over the course of several sessions.

The Four Phases are designed so Adolescent Circles can move along at their own pace. An Adolescent Circle can stay in any phase for as long as the adolescents feel comfortable and interested. Adolescents can move on to a more complex phase if they are beginning to feel bored, or are ready for a new challenge. They can also move to a simpler phase if they would like to take a break from more ambitious tasks, build team relationships with new adolescents who have joined a circle, or take more time to practice new skills.

### The facilitator’s role

The facilitator’s role is to work with adolescents to choose an activity phase that will work best for them, and then to plan activities and sessions using the guidelines and recommendations for that phase. The facilitator will also aid adolescents in assessing their circles’ progress, and help them decide if and when they are ready to move to a different phase. Facilitators can use the guidance and tools in this section to:

* understand which phases work best for different groups of adolescents, and choose a phase for their Adolescent Circle that is likely to work well;
* understand how adolescents may be developing, practicing and using competencies in each phase, so that they can choose and adapt activities according to appropriate emotional, social, learning and action goals;
* plan day-to-day sequences of activities for the phase they choose;
* run sessions with appropriate timing, processes and flow for each session; and
* assess whether and when adolescents may be ready to move on to a new phase.

Facilitators can use and adapt resources from the Activity Box as they plan phases with and for adolescents. The Activity Guides and Energizer Cards include specific recommendations for the phases within which they could be used. Facilitators can and should consider using and adapting activities from other different phases, based on their understanding of each Adolescent Circle’s interests and goals. They can also use the Inspiration Cards to stimulate more ideas for adolescents’ activities, or plan new activities themselves drawing from their own ideas.

See the introduction to the Activity Box for more explanation of how to choose, adapt and use the Activity Guides, Energizer Cards, Inspiration Cards, and Facilitator Tools.

# Understanding the Four Phases

The following provides a brief overview of the Four Phases:

1. **Starting Our Circle:** This phase helps a group of adolescents who are coming together for the first time to get to know each other and feel comfortable participating in activities together.
2. **Knowing Ourselves:** In this phase adolescents explore their identities and to learn more about themselves and each other.
3. **Connecting:** In this phase adolescents learn skills for building healthy relationships, working together and connecting with their communities.
4. **Taking Action:** In this phase adolescents learn how to work closely as a team and to take action in their families, schools and communities.

The following sections give a more detailed overview of each of the Four Phases, and how adolescents may develop and use competencies in each.

**Starting Our Circle**

The Starting our Circle phase provides adolescents with ways to build a strong circle when they gather for the first time. It enables adolescents to establish rules for their sessions, to begin working as a team, and to prepare for future learning and challenges.

The Starting Our Circle phase can also help to create the feeling of a new start in circles where members already know each other. For example, this phase works well when adolescents need to welcome many new members to the circle, or in situations where adolescents only attend sessions sporadically.

### In the Starting our Circle phase adolescents will:

* Gather for the first time
* Create a safe space
* Form rules for their sessions
* Get to know each other
* Become comfortable around other members of the circle
* Learn how to work as a team

### How are adolescents developing and using competencies in the Starting our Circle Phase?

In this phase, the emphasis is on creating a safe space where adolescents can escape from the stress of their daily lives and participate in activities at their own pace. As adolescents get to know each other and become more comfortable with other members of the circle, they learn how to express themselves through play, discussion, quiet reflection, drama, writing and art. This helps them to interact positively and creates a foundation for building stronger relationships and skills as they take on more complex challenges.

The overall goal of the Starting our Circle Phase is for adolescents to become comfortable being together and participating in activities together, as a first step toward feeling comfortable and safe enough to try new things and take on new challenges together. In the Starting our Circle Phase, adolescents are developing, practicing and using competencies, but only at a very basic level. The following chart provides an overview of how adolescents may be developing and using competencies in the Starting our Circle Phase:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competency domain** | **During this phase adolescents may:** |
| **Communication and expression** | Learn and practice new ways to communicate and express themselves, for example, through drawing and physical movement |
| **Identity and self-esteem** | Learn ways to describe themselves in words and through other forms of expression |
| **Leadership and influence** | Take a break from the stress of their circumstances, as a first step toward exploring and pursuing their priorities |
| **Problem solving and managing conflict** | Take a break from the stress of their circumstances and get to know other adolescents, as a first step toward being comfortable with others in the circle and learning interpersonal skills |
| **Coping with stress and managing emotions** | Engage in both quiet and energetic activities for relief from the stress of their circumstances |
| **Cooperation and teamwork** | Engage in simple, interactive and collaborative activities with other adolescents, as a first step toward developing cooperation skills  Get to know other adolescents, as a first step toward developing a sense of team membership |
| **Empathy and respect** | Get to know other adolescents, as a first step toward developing tolerance and empathy |
| **Hope for the future and goal setting** | Engage in both quiet and energetic activities for relief from the stress of their circumstances, and as a first step toward feeling hopeful and setting goals |
| **Critical thinking and decision making** | Take a break from the stress of their circumstances and get to know other adolescents, as a first step toward feeling comfortable, experimenting and taking on new challenges |
| **Creativity and innovation** | Learn and practice new ways to express themselves creatively, especially through the arts |

### How are adolescents working together in their circles in the Starting our Circle Phase?

During this cycle, adolescents get to know each other and gradually become comfortable together by participating in simple, fun activities that allow them to learn more about each other, but don’t require a strong sense of teamwork.

# B. Knowing Ourselves

The Knowing Ourselves phase gives adolescents a chance to learn more about who they are and what they feel. During this cycle adolescents explore their identities and learn new ways to express themselves, through different arts and forms of communication.

The Knowing Ourselves phase works well for adolescents in a circle who have had a chance to get to know each other, and are ready to explore new ideas and skills. The foundations that adolescents build during these sessions will help them to communicate with others, develop empathy and respect each other’s similarities and differences.

In the Knowing Ourselves phase adolescents will:

* Participate in sessions on a more consistent basis
* Learn more about who they are and what they feel
* Explore and recognize aspects of their identities, including their own strengths, qualities and interests
* Begin to build stronger relationships with others in their circles, and practice working together
* Learn new ways to express themselves, through different arts and forms of communication
* Become more comfortable exploring new ideas and skills with other adolescents in their circle.

### How are adolescents developing and using competencies in the Knowing Ourselves Phase?

Adolescents in the Knowing Ourselves Phase are especially focusing on developing competencies at the intrapersonal level. They are learning to know and understand themselves, to build a strong foundation to develop positive relationships with others, and to feel confident to take on new challenges.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competency domain** | **During this phase adolescents may:** |
| **Communication and expression** | * Learn about their own styles of communication and methods for personal expression, including through arts and physical movement * Practice techniques for effective listening and speaking |
| **Identity and self-esteem** | * Learn ways to describe themselves in words and other forms of expression, explore their identities, and recognize their strengths and value, as well as their weaknesses; Learn about what influences their own identity * Practice appreciating their positive qualities and caring for themselves |
| **Leadership and influence** | * Learn about their own styles of leadership and strategies for influencing others; Begin to explore their priorities and interests, as a next step toward actively pursuing them |
| **Problem solving and managing conflict** | * Begin to build healthy relationships with other adolescents in their circles, as a step toward being ready to learn, practice and use challenging interpersonal skills * Learn techniques for gathering information, analyzing problems and presenting ideas * Learn strategies for negotiation, mediation and dialogue |
| **Coping with stress and managing emotions** | * Learn about their emotions and practice techniques for managing difficult emotions * Practice expressing feelings in a healthy way, also through artistic and creative methods |
| **Cooperation and teamwork** | * Learn more about other adolescents in their circles, as a next step toward feeling like a team and preparing to work together * Learn healthy habits for working in teams * Learn how to trust others and recognize the benefits of cooperation |
| **Empathy and respect** | * Learn more about other adolescents and themselves, as a next step toward developing tolerance and empathy * Learn about the challenges and struggles of diverse groups and individuals * Learn to imagine themselves in the situation of another person, to understand their feelings and needs |
| **Hope for the future and goal setting** | * Begin to explore their priorities and interests, as a next step toward actively pursuing them * Learn about potential alternatives to the current situation, for a more positive future for themselves * Learn strategies for organization, time management and making an action plan |
| **Critical thinking and decision making** | * Learn more about themselves, as a first step toward exploring issues that interest them and making decisions that reflect their priorities * Learn basic concepts of stereotype, prejudice, discrimination and other related terms; Reflect on their own thoughts on stereotypes and causes of prejudice and discrimination * Practice doubting, questioning, analyzing, testing and making conclusions |
| **Creativity and innovation** | * Practice brainstorming and other techniques to generate creative ideas; Learn to take healthy risks * Practice patience, observation and attention to detail to enable them to perceive opportunities when they arise |

### How are adolescents working together in their circles in the Knowing Ourselves Phase?

During this cycle, the circle gets stronger and adolescents participate more regularly. As adolescents learn to express their strengths and value, the circle becomes stronger and mutual trust develops.

# C. Connecting

In this phase participants learn more about themselves and each other, and practice skills for working together. They also learn to connect with people and places beyond their circle. The curiosity, relationships and skills that adolescents develop in this cycle help prepare them for working on group projects in the Taking Action cycle.

This cycle is designed for adolescents who feel ready to interact with their peers and surroundings, and who are curious about the world around them and beyond . Adolescents who have been through difficult experiences, and who are still feeling overwhelmed or upset, may not be ready for this cycle. The activities in this cycle work best with a strong circle where adolescents know each other well, feel comfortable and safe working together, and are starting to recover from crisis.

In the Connecting phase adolescents will:

* Learn more about themselves and each other
* Learn to connect with people and places beyond their circle
* Practice skills for working together
* Continue to develop a sense of safety and comfort with other Adolescent Circle members, building more trust with each other
* Work on activities individually and collaboratively, and become more comfortable expressing their interests and goals
* Work on activities with less support, including projects that they continue over the course of several sessions
* Develop stronger social and emotional skills that will help them to relate better to their families, peers and communities.

How are adolescents developing and using competencies during the in the Connecting phase?

During this cycle, adolescents practice the skills that they have developed as they work together as a team and explore the world around them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competency domain** | **During this phase adolescents may:** |
| **Communication and expression** | * Practice and strengthen ways to communicate and express themselves, including through arts and physical movement * Reflect on communication in their family, with friends and peer groups * Practice ways to communicate effectively with family, friends and peers |
| **Identity and self-esteem** | * Further explore their identities, by connecting with their cultural traditions and communities * Improve their understanding of their strengths and value * Learn about the cultural heritage, history, customs and practices of their families, friends and peers, reflecting on similarities and differences within those groups * Practice expressing gratitude and appreciation to others; challenging bullying |
| **Leadership and influence** | * Begin to explore their priorities and interests, as a next step toward actively pursuing them * Reflect on factors that influence the opinions of family, friends and peers * Practice building trust and having a positive influence on their family, friends and peers |
| **Problem solving and managing conflict** | * Learn and practice skills for conflict management, problem solving and negotiation, and apply these skills to building strong, healthy relationships with others in their circle and beyond * Reflect on issues and concerns of family, friends and peers; Identify causes of conflict in family, friend peer groups * Discuss ways to solve problems in family, friend and peer groups that are satisfactory to everyone; Practice conflict management skills in family, friend and peer groups |
| **Coping with stress and managing emotions** | * Learn and practice skills for managing stress and other difficult feelings * Learn and understand the emotions of family, friends and peers; Recognize the relationship between feelings and conflict in family, friend and peer groups * Practice techniques for managing emotions of family, friends and peers |
| **Cooperation and teamwork** | * Learn more about others in their circle, and adolescents and adults in their communities, as a next step toward building respect for others * Practice cooperation and other teamwork skills through group activities and projects with others in their circle * Learn techniques for working effectively in teams and for cooperative problem solving * Practice building trust, fostering inclusion and healing pain in family, friend and peer groups |
| **Empathy and respect** | * Get to know and learn about other adolescents, children and adults in and beyond their communities, including those from different backgrounds * Learn about the challenges and struggles of family, friends andpeers * Learn to take the perspective of another person: a family member, friend or peer |
| **Hope for the future and goal setting** | * Learn about potential alternatives to the current situation, for a more positive future for their family, friends andpeers * Learn strategies to get family, friends and peers to work together to achieve a shared goal |
| **Critical thinking and decision making** | * Explore and discuss their interests and priorities, including approaches to solving problems and taking advantage of opportunities * Apply all of these approaches to small-scale projects that they design and lead themselves * Identify and reflect upon stereotypes and bias in their family, friend and peer groups. * Recognize weaknesses in the reasoning, discourse and arguments of families, friends and peers |
| **Creativity and innovation** | * Learn and practice more ways to express themselves creatively, especially through the arts * Practice techniques for generating ideas in groups * Reflect on experiences in family, friend and peer groups to imagine innovative alternatives to problems |

### How are adolescents working together in their circles in the Connecting phase?

During this phase, the circle becomes stronger as adolescents begin to trust each other more and to participate more regularly. The circle’s rituals, routines and group rules continue to provide the framework for working and communicating in respectful and assertive ways. Participants work on activities individually and collaboratively, and become more comfortable expressing their interests and goals. The social and emotional skills that adolescents build help them to work as a team.

**D. Taking Action**

In the Taking Action phase, adolescents apply the skills they have developed in the previous three cycles to real-world projects that they plan and carry out themselves. The Taking Action cycle provides adolescents with steps to help them to identify their priorities, form ideas, make plans, and work together. They work as a team, using their skills for communication, exploration and decision making. Circles may choose to stay in the Taking Action phase indefinitely, repeating a process of planning and carrying out projects. This phase is designed to allow adolescents to continue and sustain their activities together for as long as they wish.

In the Take Action phase adolescents will:

* Identify their priorities, form ideas, make plans, and work together
* Put their creativity and problem solving skills to work on projects that are important to them
* Work as a team, using their skills for communication, exploration and decision making
* Learn how to develop project plans, and practice their competencies to set priorities and negotiate solutions to problems
* Develop and use social and emotional skills so they relate better with their families, peers and communities
* Improve and use communication and negotiation skills to help them set priorities, make plans for projects and explore opportunities for supporting their communities
* Engage and be active in their communities beyond their activity spaces
* Develop mutual trust and further friendships.

How are adolescents developing and using competencies during the in the Taking Action phase?

Adolescents in this cycle should know each other well, and have experienced cooperating together in teams. The rituals, routines and group rules they created and reviewed together in earlier cycles provide them with a foundation for working together and communicating respectfully and assertively. Adolescents apply and strengthen the skills that they developed in previous cycles, as they interact positively and develop initiatives to carry out together in the community. During this cycle they learn how to develop project plans, set priorities and negotiate solutions to problems.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Competency domain** | **During this phase adolescents may:** |
| **Communication and expression** | * Use many skills and forms of expression as they work together with others in their circles, communities and beyond * Reflect on communication patterns in their community * Practice ways to communicate effectively within their own community and across cultural groups |
| **Identity and self-esteem** | * Strengthen their sense of identity and self-esteem by taking positive action in ways that reflect their interest and priorities * Learn about diverse groups within the community, reflecting on strengths and challenges faced by different community members * Practice inclusion of marginalized groups and community building |
| **Leadership and influence** | * Apply their motivation, new leadership skills, and sense of agency to projects that they lead and design themselves * Learn about leaders and other people who have influenced the community * Practice building trust and having a positive influence on their community through community projects and activities |
| **Problem solving and managing conflict** | * Apply conflict management, problem solving and negotiation skills as they work together with others in their circle and engage actively with children, adolescents and adults in their communities * Reflect on issues and concerns of community members; Identify causes of conflict in the community * Discuss ways to solve problems in the community; Practice conflict management skills in the community |
| **Coping with stress and managing emotions** | * Use stress management skills as they work together and take action * Learn and understand the emotions of community members and persons in conflict; Recognize the relationship between feelings and conflict in the community * Practice techniques for managing difficult emotions of community members and persons in conflict |
| **Cooperation and teamwork** | * Increase their respect for each other through group work that allows every member to contribute their unique skills and strengths * Practice cooperation and other teamwork skills through group activities and projects * Practice building trust with diverse community groups, and repairing damaged relationships |
| **Empathy and respect** | * Strengthen their tolerance and empathy as they work together and engage positively with other children, adolescents and adults * Learn about the challenges and struggles of diverse community members * Learn to take the perspective of other persons in the community, particularly disadvantaged or marginalized groups |
| **Hope for the future and goal setting** | * Increase their self-esteem and hopes by taking action on issues that are important to them * Practice setting and pursuing goals as they take positive action * Learn about potential alternatives to the current situation, for a more positive future for the whole community * Learn strategies to get diverse community members and parties to work together to achieve a shared goal |
| **Critical thinking and decision making** | * Practice experimenting and learning from results as they apply their skills to small-scale projects that they design and lead themselves * Identify and reflect upon stereotypes, discrimination and prejudice in the community * Recognize weaknesses in commonly held beliefs in the community |
| **Creativity and innovation** | * Continue to explore ways to express themselves and develop ideas for new solutions and opportunities through ongoing projects * Practice techniques for learning from community members to generate creative ideas for solving problems |

### How are adolescents working together in their circles in the Taking Action Phase?

In the Taking Action phase, adolescents grow to feel comfortable in their circle and can use their skills to work together positively in teams. Mutual trust and friendships between adolescents develop further, and adolescents also learn and practice skills for working positively and supportively even with those peers who do not become their close friends. Adolescents develop social and emotional skills through their activities, which help them to work as a team and to relate better with their families, peers and communities. Skills for communication, goal setting, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation help them to set priorities, make plans for projects and explore opportunities for supporting their communities.

**Choosing a cycle for your adolescent circle**

Facilitators, working with programme coordinators and adolescents, should use different strategies and processes to assess which phase is best for their Adolescent Circle. They can use the tools and activity guides offered in the Adolescent Kit to assess how ready adolescents in a circle are to work together and take the lead in carrying out their own initiatives. Facilitators choosing a phase for the first time, may want to review the **Circle self-assessment tool**, the overview of each Phase provided in the **Understanding the Four Phases** section above, or the summary guide in the box on this page.

**Starting Our Circle** and **Knowing Ourselves**

* Adolescents of any age who are tired or distressed, and for younger adolescents (ages 10-14). ***[Insert icon for Provide structure, routine and support]***
* Simpler activities
* Individual sessions that do not require a lot of planning or group interactions

**Connecting** and **Taking Action**

* More challenging activities
* Adolescents work together on activities and projects that involve complex thinking
* Take place over several days or longer
* May be rewarding for more confident adolescents of any age, who are calmer and more connected with each other
* May be good for older adolescents (ages 15-17) with better developed critical thinking and organizational skills

Once facilitators have been working with adolescents in a phase for some time, they can also use the **Circle self-assessment tool** to guide adolescents in assessing their own development as a circle. They can also use the **Competency assessment questionnaire tools** to assess adolescents’ individual development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to the Ten Key competencies.

Facilitators can and should use their own impressions and judgment in choosing a phase for adolescents. They should consult directly with adolescents as they do so, and base their plans on adolescents’ own suggestions and preferences (when working with adolescents who are ready to express opinions). Remember there is no one ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to choose a phase for your Adolescent Circle. Remember, too, that if a phase does not seem to be working well for adolescents, you can always adapt and move to a more or less advanced phase.

The most important purpose of the phases is to allow adolescents the flexibility they need to work at their own pace, so that they can take as long as they want and need to practice skills at a level that works for them, and move forward to new challenges as soon as they are ready. Facilitators should always keep this important concept in mind as they choose phases for adolescents, and determine whether adolescents should stay in their current phase or move to a new one.

### Getting started

When facilitators first bring adolescents together as a circle, they should strongly consider beginning with the **Starting Our Circle** Phase. This phase gives adolescents a chance to introduce themselves and to develop some basic trust and comfort being with each other. Even for a circle in which adolescents already know each other but have never worked together as a group, the **Starting Our Circle** phase gives them a fresh start. It provides an opportunity to begin interacting and working together in a new way, creating a solid foundation for new activities that require trust, cooperation and collaboration.

From **Starting Our Circle**, adolescents can follow their own path to the **Knowing Ourselves** phase, the **Connecting** phase, and the **Taking Action** phase. Each phase is designed to build on the one before it, supporting adolescents to recover, develop their skills and engage more actively as they progress from one cycle to the next. Depending on the maturity and interests of adolescents in a circle, and the extent to which they already know each other and have previous experiences working together, they may also ‘skip’ over some phases and move directly to the more advanced phases.

### Moving through the phases

After adolescents have been working together in one phase for some time, they may be ready for a change. They develop new competencies through their activities and in their lives beyond, and become more experienced in working together as a circle. In many cases an Adolescent Circle may become ready to take on greater challenges, advancing to phases that allow them to work together with more independence from the facilitator. Adolescents tn the two more advanced phases (Connecting and Taking Action) may want to take a break and move to a phase that includes simpler, fun, easy activities – even if only for a few sessions.

Other circumstances may have a bearing on which phase is best for Adolescent Circles. If new adolescents are joining a circle, or if those who are part of a circle are leaving for any reason, it may be helpful to move back to the more basic phases to give the circle a fresh start. If adolescents in a circle have very different interests or are at different levels of developing competencies it may work well to divide them into different circles, then choose and plan different phases that are appropriate for each.

Adolescent Circles do not need to move from one phase to the next in any particular order or timeframe. Adolescents should decide when they are ready to move on, and, with support from the facilitator, which phase will work best for them. They may decide to repeat a phase that they have done in the past. This can be a good way to strengthen their skills, and to improve how they work together.

Alternatively, if adolescents find a phase helpful and fun, they can continue it for as long as they want. This may be a good way to feel safe doing things that are familiar and comfortable. If adolescents are ready for a new challenge, they can move on to a phase they haven’t tried.

It is important to understand that each of the phases can be helpful and enjoyable. Each phase involves activities that can be fun for any age group, and each focuses on skills that adolescents can practice throughout their lives. Do not pressure the adolescents to move to a more ‘advanced’ phase, taking on more serious and/or complex topics before they are ready or interested in doing so. Remember that some adolescents have not developed the cognitive or social capacities to work together on complex tasks. Remember, too, that adolescents’ activities should address their goals – and that having fun and taking a break from stress is a valid goal for adolescents, especially for those living in challenging circumstances.

To determine whether an Adolescent Circle should move to another phase or continue in the same one, facilitators should…

**Complete 5-10 sessions in a phase** before considering whether to move to a new phase. This gives the circle time to participate in a few activities so that they and the facilitator have a sense of whether they are in the best phase. Within a sequence of at least five sessions adolescents also have time to go through the process of setting their own goals, and deciding when they have achieved them.

**Observe the adolescents**. If many seem restless, bored or disengaged, they may be ready for something more challenging. If they seem overwhelmed or confused, a less advanced phase may help them to develop the competencies and strength as a circle at a more appropriate level. Disagreements and conflicts between adolescents may also be a sign that activities are too challenging for them, or are requiring them to work together in ways for which they are not yet ready.

**Consult adolescents.** Ask adolescents if they would like to take on greater challenges, or if they just want to have more fun and relaxing time together. The **Setting group goals** activity is one process for hearing more from adolescents about what they want from their time together. ***[Insert icon for Listen to adolescents.]***



**[*TO JASON: CAN WE WORK ON A NEW DIAGRAM TOGETHER? I WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE ONE THAT INDICATES THAT YOU DON”T NECESSARILY MOVE IN ONE DIRECTION.*]**

**Planning activity phases**

Once facilitators have chosen the phase that is likely to work best for their Adolescent Circle, they need to plan the phase. This means outlining a sequence of activities for adolescents’ sessions.

The Activity Box of the Adolescent Kit offers a wide range of activities from which facilitators (with adolescents, when ready) can choose. Those guides indicate which activities can work best in each phase. Facilitators are encouraged to review **all** of the guides in the activity box, not just the ones that are indicated for their adolescents’ current activity phase. Adapt other activities to work well for your Adolescent Circle. Be creative and design your own activity! ***[Insert icon for Improvise and adapt].***

Use the **Phase Planning Tool** to plan a sequence of activities with an appropriate balance and flow. For the Starting our Circle and Knowing Ourselves phases, this means including a variety of different activities that balance simple fun and games with opportunities to learn and try new things, and high-intensity activities with those that are restful and quiet. For the Connecting and Take Action Phases this means creating a logical flow of activities that enable adolescents to work together on a topic or project from one session to the next. For all phases, planning means looking for the right moment for adolescents to agree to and review their group rules (see ‘Planning Sessions’), and to set and review progress toward their group goals.

### Working together toward group goals

Giving adolescents an opportunity to reflect on and share their own goals for their time together in the Adolescent Circle is a key step for planning. When facilitators (and programme coordinators, and other adults supporting adolescents) know what adolescents want from their activities – including what they enjoy, and what they hope to achieve – they are better able to plan activities that adolescents find relevant and interesting, and that keep them engaged.

Facilitators can use adolescents’ group goals to determine which activities to choose. If adolescents are interested in developing a certain set of competencies, or just have a kind of activity they enjoy (such as drawing, dancing, writing, building models, or carrying out interviews) facilitators can choose activities from the Activity Box accordingly. Facilitators can also adapt activities to adolescents’ goals. For example, if adolescents in the Connecting or Take Action phases are especially interested in community service, facilitators can plan a sequence of activities that guides adolescents through the process of planning and carrying out a project with a focus on community service.

Adolescents starting a new phase should have a chance to discuss and agree to their goals during one of the earliest sessions in that phase. The **Setting group goals** activity can be a helpful tool to do so.

Adolescents’ goals may be related to their emotional wellbeing or learning, or to activities they want to do inside and beyond their circle. For circles that are just starting out together (for example in the Starting Our Circle phase), the goals can be simple, such as:

* Have fun,
* Meet new people,
* Spend time with peers, or
* Take a break from other responsibilities.

Adolescents also may have goals to learn competencies that they can use to address challenges they face; or to work toward their broader goals and aspirations in their lives. For example, adolescents may want to:

* Learn and practice new ways to express their ideas, including through the arts, music or writing;
* Learn new ways to communicate or negotiate with family members; or
* Know and practice ways to cope with difficult emotions, including stress.

Adolescents’ goals also may be linked to positive changes that they want to see in their lives, or in their families, communities or societies. For example, adolescents may want to: ***[Insert icon for Challenge adolescents.]***

* Learn about cultural traditions;
* Develop skills to build stronger relationships with family and friends;
* Organize an event or project that is helpful to the community.

In the more basic phases, adolescents’ goals may be related only to how they want to spend time together in their circles. As they progress to more advanced phases, they may be ready to explore and express possibilities for how their activities will help them to feel well emotionally, learn, and form and enjoy relationships with others. Adolescents in the Connecting and Taking Action Phase may have more ambitious goals for changes in their lives, or for contributions they want to make to their communities. ***[Insert icon for Structure and support.]***

Whatever phase they may be in, encourage adolescents to set realistic goals that can be achieved with the time and resources available. Adolescents should set goals within the first three sessions of any new phase, and display them in the meeting space. All of the members of Adolescent Circle should have a chance to participate in sharing their ideas and agreeing to their goals.

Once they have had a chance to participate in activities together for a few days or weeks, Adolescent Circles should review their progress toward goals on a regular basis. The **Reviewing progress toward group goals** activity is a useful tool to do so. Adolescents just starting to work together, such as those in the Starting Our Circle or the Knowing Ourselves phases, may find it helpful have a short review of their progress every time they meet (for example, during the Review step of their session) to share feedback about their experiences with new activities. Adolescent Circles who have been working together for some time, such as those in the Connecting and Taking Action phases, may want more time to assess their progress, and may want to take an entire session for a this discussion.

### Planning and facilitating sessions in each phase

Specific guidance for facilitators in planning and facilitating sessions for each of the four Phases follows.

### Planning the Starting our Circle phase

To plan a sequence of activities for the Starting Our Circle phase:

* **Focus on keeping things simple and fun** for adolescents coming together for the first time.
* **Choose activities that can be completed in one session** as opposed to longer-term projects, as some adolescents may not be able to participate in every session, and new adolescents may be joining the group.
* **Choose activities that are simple and easy to understand,** since adolescents in a new situation may find it difficult to concentrate, and in some cases there may be language barriers.
* **Include a mix of high energy and quiet activities** to support adolescents’ natural process of recovery after a difficult experience
* **Include activities that allow adolescents to decide on a name for their circle, design their opening and closing rituals, and agree to their group rules – these**  activities give adolescents a chance to create structure and routine, which gives them comfort, certainty and a sense that the circle is a special place.
* **Repeat activities that the adolescents enjoy.** This gives adolescents a chance to practice and feel comfortable with something familiar -- However, it is important to vary activities so that they are fun for adolescents with different interests and abilities.
* **Plan and adapt activities that all adolescents can and will participate in**, since the first sessions send an implicit message to the entire community – including those adolescents who may not join on the first day – about who they are intended for; *It is especially important to include activities that are accessible and inclusive. For example, if adolescents with disabilities do not participate at first, the activities they see or hear about will influence their impressions about whether or not they are welcome. Including activities that have been typically considered appropriate for both adolescent boys and girls in adolescents’ cultural context sends a message that the programme is for both boys and girls. Keep in mind that both boys and girls should be supported in exploring any activities that interest them, and Adolescent Circles should create spaces for them to challenge or even transform limiting or harmful gender norms.* ***[Insert icon for Include all adolescents.]***
* **Encourage adolescents to play games that they know already, especially during the Challenge step of the session.** Traditional games can be a way for adolescents to connect with their cultural roots, and playing something familiar can remind them of their abilities.
* **Introduce some new activities and games (such as those in Energizer Cards).** This allows everybody to try something new, and helps adolescents with different abilities to participate on an equal level with others. ***[Insert icon for Build on the positive.]***
* **Focus on activities that allow the adolescents to get to know each other during this cycle.** Games and activities where the adolescents work in groups and pairs can work well.
* **Support adolescents in setting group goals that are simple and attainable in relation to how they will spend their time together in their circles** (such as “having fun’ or ‘making friends.’) Use the ideas they share to help you understand what they want; avoid pushing adolescents to take on challenges when they are just getting started.

### Tips for facilitating sessions in the Starting our Circle phase

**Use the same steps recommended in the ‘Planning Sessions’ section of the Adolescent Kit**, but move smoothly from one step to another, spending no more than 10-20 minutes on each.

**Follow the same session structure consistently**, and include some of the same activities from one day to the next. This is particularly helpful for adolescents who may be adjusting to new circumstances or coping with difficult experiences, and for participants who can’t come to every session. **[Insert icon for structure and support key approach]**

**Include discussions, but keep the amount of time talking and listening brief**. During this phase, adolescents should spend more time playing and doing than talking.

**Include name games and activities where the adolescents work in pairs or small groups** for short periods of time, to help them to get to know each other. Encourage adolescents to work in different groups and pairs every session, so that all members of the circle get to know each other.

**Encourage adolescents who are sitting quietly to participate more actively**, but allow them to sit back and observe quietly if the prefer.

**Welcome adolescents** even if they arrive late, leave early, have trouble remembering names, misunderstand directions or make other mistakes.

**Allow adolescents to decide on a name for their circle, contribute ideas for an opening and closing ritual, and agree to their group rules.** These activities give adolescents a chance to create structure and routine, which gives them comfort, and a sense that the circle is a special place that belongs to them.

### Planning the Knowing Ourselves phase

When planning and running sessions for adolescents in the Knowing Ourselves phase facilitators should…

* **Include many activities for adolescents to describe and express themselves**. Adolescents can experiment with different arts, games and physical movements to learn about themselves and interact with others.
* **Include activities that give adolescents an opportunity to work individually on activities** during this cycle. This can be an opportunity for adolescents to have quiet time away from hectic households or responsibilities, and to focus on mastering new skills. Consider giving them individual activities such as drawing, building or making crafts during the Challenge step. During the Challenge step, adolescents may want to work on a project over the course of several days. ***[Insert icon for Improvise and adapt.]***
* **Include activities that introduce adolescents to new words to describe characteristics, feelings, and other aspects of their identity.** If they speak different languages or are learning a new language, help them to learn a few vocabulary words.
* **Include activities that give adolescents a chance to learn about each other, and to exchange information and ideas about themselves.** Help adolescents to recognize their similarities and differences.
* **Use the Agreeing to group rules and Reviewing group rules activities** to help adolescents agree to how they will share feedback in a way that makes everyone feel encouraged and free to experiment. Adolescents will be sharing information about themselves with each other, so it is important that they feel safe, supported and respected.
* **Encourage adolescents to consider new possibilities for their group goals.** Introduce them to new terms and concepts, such as those related to the Ten Key Competencies, that can help them to articulate new possibilities for what they want to do, learn or achieve. However, do not push them to take on challenges if they prefer to focus on more basic goals such as enjoying their time together, trying new kinds of activities, or taking a break from stress.

### Tips for facilitating sessions in the Knowing Ourselves phase

* **Continue to vary sessions so that there are both high intensity and quiet activities.** If the Challenge step involves quiet, independent work, use a Warm-Up that gives adolescents a chance to move around and interact with each other.
* **Use the Discussion, Review and Take Away steps as opportunities for adolescents to share information,** give each other positive feedback and encouragement, and learn more about each other.
* **Follow adolescents’ lead in taking more or less time for these steps,** depending on their level of interest and comfort. ***[Insert icon for Talk to adolescents and listen]***
* **Ask for feedback from the participants during the closing review step of each session, and discuss any questions they have**. If necessary, repeat the same topic again during another session.

### Planning the Connecting phase

Adolescents in this cycle can work on activities with less support, including projects that they continue over the course of several sessions. When planning and running sessions for adolescents in the Connecting phase facilitators should…

* **Plan a sequence of activities on a related topic** that adolescents can work together pn over the course of several sessions.
* **Include activities that give adolescents a chance to practice skills for communicating and relating.** They can use drama, games, and other arts to simulate real-world situations, and learn from each other in different ways. Adolescents in this phase should have a chance to form friendships and supportive, respectful working relationships with each other.
* **Include activities that give adolescents a chance to explore and connect with the world around them.** They may venture outside the space where their circle usually meets to look at their physical environment, find locally available materials to use in their activities, and map their community in different ways. They can discover cultural traditions or new art forms that they want to try for themselves. They can meet with and learn from adults in the community, formally or informally, individually or in groups. ***[Insert icon for Build connections.]***
* **Give adolescents opportunities start to plan and carry out projects together during this cycle --**  but they should not feel pushed to do so. Use the activities in this cycle to allow adolescents to explore and express what they feel and see in different ways. This cycle should give them time to focus on their own priorities, discover new possibilities and continue to practice new skills for communication and expression. ***[Insert icon for Challenge adolescents.]***
* **Include plenty of opportunities for adolescents to discuss and reflect on their process for working together as a circle.** Use the **Reviewing group rules** activity to do so. As teamwork skills are an important focus of this cycle, adolescents should take time to reflect on their progress in working together.
* Encourage adolescents to challenge themselves as they set group goals. Acknowledge their potential and foster their confidence. Help them set goals at an attainable scale in relation to things that they can do, learn and achieve with the resources available.

### Tips for facilitating sessions in the Connecting phase

When planning and running sessions for adolescents in the Connecting phase facilitators should…

**Give adolescents an opportunity to facilitate steps of the session, or even plan and facilitate entire sessions** if they are interested and feel ready.

**Check with adolescents to see if they want more time to work on the same activity from one session to the next,** especially if they have not finished something that they are enjoying working on, or need to complete in order to be prepared for the next session. The Review and Take-away steps of a session are good opportunities to do this.

**If adolescents venture outside their activity space during this cycle, make sure that community members are aware and supportive of their activities**. Accompany them if necessary.

**Give adolescents the opportunity to try to overcome challenges and resolve disagreements they face in working together** before you intervene to support them. ***[Insert icon for Let adolescents lead.]***

### Planning the Taking Action phase

Adolescents in the Taking Action phase should have the skills and experience to take the lead in some (or perhaps all) of the facilitation and planning of sessions. They should feel enthusiastic about working independently, and ready to experiment with different strategies. They should have the skills, relationships and emotional strength to cope when things don’t go as planned, and to resolve differences when they emerge. Adolescents in this cycle can work together with very little support from the facilitator. The facilitator should work with the adolescents to choose and plan activities that guide adolescents through a set of activities that enable them to explore their own interests and priorities, decide on a specific topic of interest, and plan and carry out a project together over several sessions.

When planning sessions for adolescents in the Taking Action phase facilitators should…

* **Consult and collaborate closely with adolescents about activity plans, and let them take the lead** in deciding how they want to use each upcoming session to help them work on their projects or initiatives together. One good way to do this is to develop an outline of activities, and then consult with adolescents regularly to change and adapt plans based on how their projects are progressing.
* **Plan sessions that include flexible time** for adolescents to create their own structure and process for working together, for example by using the **Practice and project time activity.**
* **Continue to include sessions for adolescents to assess how they are working together as a circle** (for example, using or adapting the **Reviewing group rules** activity). Even adolescents that are experienced and comfortable working together as a team will benefit from this process.
* **Suggest that adolescents take a break from their work on projects from time to time,** and plan occasional fun or relaxing sessions for them to do so. However, do not force them to stop their work together if they do not want to do so.
* **Include sessions for adolescents to reflect on their progress in achieving their group goals.** (Use **Reviewing progress toward group goals**). A good time to do this is after the adolescents have completed work on a project together and are ready to start on the next.
* **When adolescents have completed work together on one project over the course of several sessions, support them in starting again when they are ready.** Consider using the same sequence of activities that you used before to guide them through planning and carrying out a project together, since they may be able to take even more leadership in managing a process with which they are already familiar. Alternatively, to give them a sense of variety and help to stimulate new ideas for the types of initiatives they might work on together, you may wish to consider choosing or creating different activities that help guide them through a project planning process..
* **Encourage adolescents to challenge themselves as they set group goals.** Acknowledge their potential and recognize what they have already accomplished together as a circle. Recognize that especially in this phase adolescents may become more ambitious, so **continue to help them set goals at an attainable scale in relation to things that they can do, learn and achieve in their context and with the resources available**. In some cases adolescents can learn positive things even when they don’t fully achieve the goals they set for themselves, but in others, experiences of disappointment may compound other feelings of discouragement they face in difficult circumstances.

**Tips for facilitating the Connecting phase**

**Encourage adolescents to explore a wide range of possibilities for their projects and initiatives**, including those that are helpful or practical for themselves and their communities, and others that are fun and inspiring.

**Let adolescents come up with their own ideas for projects.** Try not to make suggestions before adolescents have had some time to think of ideas themselves, and avoid allowing other adults in the community to impose their priorities on the circle. **This includes allowing adolescents to take on projects that may not turn out exactly as they hope, as long as they won’t be overwhelmed or disappointed by the outcome.** Be prepared to step in and help with alternative strategies or adaptations to their plans.

**Allow adolescents to try to solve problems for themselves** when these come up, including by resolving disagreements among themselves, and trying new strategies their when steps in their projects don’t go as planned.

**Step in and offer support** if adolescents seem very angry, hurt, upset or disappointed. Remember that adolescents are still growing to adulthood, and many have been through difficult experiences. Use the **Reviewing group rules activity** to help with these interventions.

**Facilitate discussions between adolescents and adults in the community about their plans and ideas.** Encourage adults to support the adolescents. Make sure adults and the community are aware of adolescents’ projects, which builds trust ***[Insert icon for Build connections.]***