



## A Circle of Friends – Some ways of describing it .....

A Circle of Friends is made up of the people you choose and who are happy to

- Come together with you on a regular enough basis (say every month)
- Enjoy time together, share the joy you take in things that interest you
- Figure out how to promote your best interests
- Assist you make the best of your gifts, assets, and strengths, and
- Support you live a purposeful life, and make a valued contribution to the community you live in.

**What is a Circle of Friends? - J. Barrett – Community Living Project (Sth Australia)** A group of people who are intentionally invited to come together in friendship and support of a person who has a disability, for the purposes of protecting their friends interests into the future. Not with the expectation that this group might necessarily have a responsibility of 'caring for' the person BUT with the expectation that if asked people might be pleased to make time and agree to join the Circle to 'look out' for the person.

**'The Circle is hard to describe; it's too simple'** (Regina DeMarasse - **Circles Network – UK**) - A circle of support, sometimes called a circle of friends, is a group of people who meet together on a regular basis to help somebody accomplish their personal goals in life. The circle acts as a community around that person (the 'focus person') who, for one reason or another, is unable to achieve what they want in life on their own and decides to ask others for help. The focus person is

in charge, both in deciding who to invite to be in the circle, and also in the direction that the circle's energy is employed. A facilitator takes care of the work required to keep it running.

The members of the circle, who may include family, friends and other community members are not paid to be there. They are involved because they care enough about the focus person to give their time and energy to helping that person to overcome obstacles and increase the options which are open to them. Although the focus person's goals are the primary drive in everything the circle does, the relationship is not just one way. The members will all have diverse gifts and interests, and there can appear many new opportunities and possibilities which had not even been considered before the forming of the circle. Because of this, an important function of the circle is to regularly re-visit the plans which they are working with, to keep the direction current in terms of what the person really wishes to achieve.



The circle is not a service or tool to be applied to a certain group of people. Circles are about seeing people as individuals who feel they need support in order to take more control over their own lives. A circle properly facilitated is empowering to all of the individuals involved and, unlike many service systems, does not reinforce dependence.



### Who to invite – One person at a time

If you are considering initiating a circle of friends alongside someone maybe start with this question: Other than yourself, what type of person would you like to have in your family member's life to

- stand by them,
- look out for them,
- offer friendly words of advice,
- celebrate the good times together

	<i>People in My Life)</i>
<b>1. CORE CIRCLE</b> – those who we share great intimacy, our secrets, and heartfelt emotions. These are people or perhaps animals or objects that are so dear to us that their absence would impact us greatly. This may or may not include family members.	
<b>2. CIRCLE OF FUN</b> – those people who are friends or relatives who we call upon to go out to dinner, see a movie, but are not those who we consider our most dear friends or those we must see regularly.	
<b>3. THE GARDEN CIRCLE</b> – people or organizations we participate in e.g. spiritual groups, where you work, where you went or go to school, clubs, organizations, athletic teams, or where you participate and interact with people. Some of these individuals may later be in Circle one or two! Circle Three is the garden for sowing future relationships	
<b>4. CIRCLE OF EXCHANGE</b> – people who are paid to be in our lives. Doctors, teachers, dentists, social workers, therapists, hairdressers, car mechanics, and the like make up the numbers here.	