

ASKING AND OFFERING

- *SOME NOTERS FROM JANET KLEES ON ASKING AND OFFERING FOR POTENTIAL CIRCLE MENTORS*

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You ASK for a favour, but you OFFER a contribution. Therefore, when it is clear in your mind what is the contribution of this person, then very often we are simply offering this contribution to the other party....not asking for anything at all. This means that whenever you are looking into a volunteer role you are not asking if you can have it, but rather offering your time to the organization. This little twist is very powerful.

Take it out of the circle example for the moment, and from the point of view of a support person, or parent, or whoever going and thinking of helping a person find a job or take on a volunteer role.

For a volunteer role, the organizing calling for volunteers (the arts festival, the nearby park, the food bank) has already done the asking. They are asking for people who have time, interest and energy to step forward and offer this to them. Therefore, the ask has been made already, and you are stepping forward with the person you support to offer their (or your joint) contributions of time, energy and especially interest. For a reluctant or shy asker, there is no asking to do in this scenario, just a joyful offer!

In a job situation, I have found that when you try to link a person to a job for which they have little interest and not particular affinity, you end up sounding like you are pleading or asking for a favour to give us a chance and see if this will work out. Nice people often say yes, or maybe...but it is a weak start. If instead, you link a person who is really keen about hockey to see about a job in his local hockey arena, you can say that John (a true story) is a passionate hockey fan who is looking for some part time work, and what more natural place to start than a hockey arena. John might be wearing a hockey jersey for the interview and it would be natural to begin a conversation about favourite teams, etc. In looking around the arena, John keen interest in the sport would be evident. So, it begins less to feel like asking for a job, but more about offering the services of a potential employee who would love to make a contribution here. Again, this latter is a much easier call than an ask as above.

Back to circles, when circle members are clear on all of the ways that the person makes or is a contribution to the ordinary life of their community, then it is a matter of talking about where might these contributions naturally find a home. For someone who is great at greeting people and helping them feel welcome and recognized, the circle might say that person might find a place of belonging being an usher at a local church, greeting people as they arrive to the weekend music festival, or having a volunteer welcoming role at a local

museum. The perhaps various circle members will take on making this connection - but when the contribution is firmly in their minds, they can so much more easily say "Rose would be a great asset to your festival because she has such a joyful way of greeting people as they arrive..." than saying "do you think that Rose might be able to volunteer in some small way in your festival this year. It would mean so much to her and it should not be much trouble to you". Do you see/feel the difference?

CIRCLE MENTORS ASKING OTHERS TO JOIN THE CIRCLE

This is another kind of Ask but some of the basics remain. They must be firm and clear on the contributions and assets of the person. In addition, I've found a few more things to be helpful: they must help the invitee to understand that the new party has something to offer to the circle (maybe they can bring in the perspective of people of the same age as the core circle member, maybe they share a passion and can help figure out how to take that on more deeply, maybe they are a neighbour who would like to extend welcome in the neighbourhood). They need to understand that many people first come to the circle out of curiosity and often because they feel pity or wanting to help. However, in the long run, almost all circle members begin to understand that they benefit from the sense of community, from the sense of being in the present moment, and from the sense of appreciation of life. You can't really tell people they will get this, but often, almost always, they will over time say this is so. It is helpful to know this in advance. They must be excited and positive. It is often helpful (almost always) to issue the invitation together with or on behalf of the core circle member.

FACILITATORS CRAFTING CONTEXT FOR RELATIONSHIPS

In another context, or speaking on a slightly different but relevant topic, I would have been up for the next kinds of steps for facilitators and that is growing their understanding of how to craft the kinds of situations (within circle discussions) that would lead to more and ongoing relationship -- so a sort of primer to my ideas in *Building a context for relationship* and the idea that you need to craft situations where four things are present at the same time:

1. a place in community
2. reliable and frequent presence
3. a contributing typical and familiar role, and
4. other valued people present.

This means that circle facilitators do not feel a discussion is ended for a plan when it does not meet all of the criteria, that each discussion is an opportunity to teach some aspect of this, and that facilitators must be ready to address the tough stuff.

For example - *signing up for a disabled swim class is one suggestion but I wonder where else in our community that he could*



- *meet others who are primarily interested in swimming and water events*
- *could be great role models and mentors for him around excellent technique and typical adult interactions*
- *help everyone focus on his passion (love of swimming and water) rather than his disability and*
- *potentially meet others who could help him get to and from the classes over time or provide welcome and introduction to other young guys?*

These things arise when members are still learning about what is importance in planning and building a good life.

YOUNG FAMILIES

Mostly, I would say to young families, to do it yourselves and keep the paid people out of it...but that is not really possible with older families who do not have the mobility or the connections themselves anymore to make it happen in more natural ways.

MORE FROM JANET KLEES –
'So You Want To Build a Circle' in - *Our Presence Has Roots* (2005)
'The Asking Role' in - *We Come Bearing Gifts* (1996)

WEBSITES: www.legacies.ca or www.deohaeko.com

These comments were made by Janet Klees in the context of our consideration of the issue of people making an 'ASK' for help when assisting with a person Circle of Friends in for preparation the Clan Beo Circles of Support Foundation Program 2013.

Many thanks to Janet for her generosity in considering these issues so carefully

