

Being in a Circle

Circle is a unique shape as every point on the circle is equidistant from the centre. The concept of equality depicted in Circle has been used very creatively by Salony Priya, counseling psychologist in dealing with students and their differences. Interactive forums were created in each class where students sat in a circle and discussed their class situations and problems. Name calling, peer teasing, peer bullying can be easily handled if we introduce 'interactive circle time' activities on a regular basis.

Through brain storming sessions she was able to touch on various issues effecting interpersonal relations among peers.

- We are all different but not opposite to each other,
- We are different but not odd,
- We are different yet we have something in common
- We can be different yet be in agreement
- are some of the messages highlighted in these discussions.

It is an effective way to develop sensitivity and thinking skills.

This encourages the children to think, do retrospection and speak about their thoughts. Through these activities and their subsequent discussion children are encouraged to develop emotional literacy, think more about their own behaviour and its effect on others, and share in the responsibility for creating a better learning and caring atmosphere. For example, being called names upsets children. During circle sessions, they are kept emotionally 'safe', and hence some children take the opportunity to talk about the misery this name-calling causes them. With abundance of praises levied on the children during the session it enhances their self esteem.

Jean Mosley has conducted sessions for training teachers to use circle time activities in dealing with students. She has advocated that "when motivated through the Quality Circle Time approach to think about solutions to the problems that their behavior causes themselves and their peers, children can devise many inventive systems to help foster their aims".

Circle time practiced over and over again leads to development of a strong rapport between the pupil and the teacher. It is also an effective way to develop faith and trust in the teacher. Circle time activities can be used further for:-

1. To enhance the pupils' self-esteem, and encourage self-respect and respect for others.
2. To encourage pupils to develop their independence through becoming responsible for their own behaviour, and achieving self-discipline and self-control.
3. To develop interpersonal skills which facilitate co-operation with others, problem-solving and rational conflict-resolution skills.

While introducing circle time teachers should allow some breathing exercises with children. Then based on the area of concern reflection should be initiated followed by Team building, co-operative or calming game or visualisation activity. Ideally the sessions should end with a thank you sharing among children .

Salony Priya , counselling psychologist.

