



This month's circle tale comes to us from Kit Wilson, a writer, therapist, and one of the founding members of the Grandmothers Circles in Arizona. Thank you, Kit.

Circle Tale 23, August 2001

Self as the Source of the Story

Someone rings the bell and a hush falls in the circle. I swallow down my fear and say "I'll go next." I force myself to raise my eyes and look at each woman, see the kindness, see them wanting to listen. Christina gives a little nod. I clear my throat and begin to read my story...

We have been living together, sitting in Circle, and writing together for five days now. The occasion is "The Self as the Source of the Story", the classic writing workshop Christina has taught for a dozen years. This session is held at the COD Ranch in Arizona, a sweet high desert clarity presenting itself in December light. Today is our final session, our last opportunity to share what we have written.

This is my second time to experience the power of this very special retreat. Christina teaches The Self as the Source of the Story, using the principles and practices of Peer Spirit circling to provide the safety, bonding, and spiritual grounding that enables participants, as writers, to move deeply into their own stories. After the first workshop I returned with a strong sense of myself as 'writer', an identity I had been hesitant to claim since most of my previous writing was professional or academic. I also came away with the beginning of a writing "practice" that I could make a part of my life.

Even though I truly trusted the process, I was apprehensive. Six weeks before, just after Halloween, I had had a stroke. By early December, when the workshop was scheduled, I was able to feel grateful about the outcome: I was, after all, alive, with no motor impairment. However, my speech had been effected as had my ability to remember words. Sentences often came out garbled. Sometimes there were long pauses between thoughts. I wondered if I'd ever be able to write, creatively, again.

Christina was very reassuring. "Just come. Don't worry." By the second evening, though still self-conscious about the remnants of aphasia, I had my focus: I would write about the stroke.

The week provided ever-deepening writing guidance, small circles to read our work with feedback, thought-provoking exercises, time in silence and Christina's wise and lucid teaching. I was able to write from inside my stroke as I experienced it when it was happening.

On our final day of sharing, each story brought the group to a deeper level of compassion for the story of life journeys. When I finished reading, I looked around again and saw my own tears reflected in the eyes of the Circle. I had come to the workshop to see if I could still write, but I had also arrived raw and vulnerable in the traumatic aftermath of Stroke. Thanks to the combination of a loving community, the security of a PeerSpirit circle, and Christina's intelligent and compassionate guidance I experienced an unexpected and gentle healing of heart and spirit.

For more information on this year's Self as the Source workshop, please see the *Writing Workshops* page of our website.

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*