



This month's circle tale highlights a way circle can show up in health care and signals the coming of our next PeerSpirit booklet on circle in health care settings, which will be released in a few months. So we close a cycle and open a cycle, with thanks to Ann Klaff for sending along this story.

Circle Tale #55: December 2004 The Talking Stick

I am not sure where the talking stick concept comes from but I was first introduced to it by Christina when she started a writing circle, and that was 14 years ago.

It worked beautifully for our group because it helped keep the extroverts quiet and gave a chance to the introverts to talk. (In fact it was so successful that now we can't get the introverts to stop talking, but that is another story!) We first used a gnarly, long stick, found on the shores of Lake Superior but then moved on to smaller items and now we take turns without needing a talking stick. The thing about an idea like a talking stick is that you never know who is going to use it and when it is going to pop up.

A good example of this is my husband, John, who over the years seems to have absorbed the circle idea. John, a surgeon, works in a group practice with nine partners. They hired a consultant to work with them on creating a vision for the group practice. As part of his job the consultant interviewed each member of the group and came to John last. He told John that apparently the most common complaint among the members of the group was the way the Board meetings were run. They felt that everyone talked at once, nobody listened, and not much got decided. John asked the consultant if he had ever heard of the talking stick and then explained how it worked.

A few days later, after the Board meeting which John did not attend, he was talking to the office manager who asked if John had ever heard of the talking stick. The manager went on to say that at the meeting the consultant had introduced the talking stick concept and, using one of his books as the object they passed hand to hand, proceeded with the meeting. They also committed to using the concept at a retreat scheduled later in the year.

It is never too late to learn a new idea, not even when it is a group of A-type personalities!!!

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.*