

Introduction workshop reader

This document summarizes the topics we cover in introduction workshops and Circling events of Authentic Europe.

Rules

Within Authentic Europe we use four rules for all participants of all workshops:

Integrity (assumed)

We assume that you act with integrity: you do what you promise you'll do, you won't do what you promised you wouldn't do.

Should you find yourself in a position where you broke a promise and are out of integrity, we expect you to:

1. Discover and acknowledge the impact it has had on the others,
2. Make amends, and
3. Recommit or renegotiate the agreement.

Honor self (accepted by unanimous vote)

We assume you are healthy adults: this is not therapy, this is (hopefully deep) relational play. Even so, sometimes something feels just off for you, as too much.

We expect you to honor yourself: If something feels seriously off to you, honor yourself and don't participate or suggest a modification that would fit you.

And we invite you to go a bit outside your comfort zone, as they say in yoga: "stretch, don't tear".

Honor other (accepted by unanimous vote)

Extend positive intent to the others in the workshop: assume that, even if they said something hurtful, they intended the best for you.

Physical violence is never acceptable in Authentic Europe events.

Retro-active confidentiality (accepted by unanimous vote)

Should someone ask to keep something confidential, we commit to honoring that by not speaking about that outside the group of people present when the confidential item was shared.

Asking for confidentiality can happen at any moment. Of course, if this happens much later, people could have shared this already.

We suggest you share your experiences (those that are not confidential) with others from your own experience. So not "Wouter cried in the Circle", but "someone cried in the Circle, and that had me feel sad".

Background of this specific form of confidentiality is that most closely matches reality of how things are shared. Blanket confidentiality agreements are often immediately broken by disclosing you went to a workshop with someone. We want you to be able to hold the confidentiality where it is requested, and we want you to share and use your experience outside the workshop.

Games played

We played the Noticing game and the Curiosity game.

Noticing game

The Noticing game still surprises me (Wouter) in the depth of connection it brings in such a short time, and the training of owning one's experience at the same time.

The game is simple:

- You pair up and chose a person A and B.
- Person A starts with "Standing here with you, I am noticing ..."
- Person B answers with "Hearing that, I am noticing ..."
- Person A answers in the same way; "Hearing that, I am noticing ..."
- Repeat going back and forth

What is noticed can be anything, but it should be the speaker's truthful experience in the here and now. We call this "owning your experience".

You know when you "own your experience" when the other cannot deny this is true (for you). For example "You make me sick" can be denied (maybe you ate something wrong, it wasn't me but my neighbor, ...). Properly owned it becomes: "Standing here with you, I notice a sense of nausea".

We expanded to:

- *Noticing* observable things, something you could see, hear, feel physically, ..., of the other, you, the world.
- *Imagining* something you imagine is true for the other, you, the world. A useful word for this is "seem", as in: "We/you/I seem ..."
- *Feeling* emotions inside you, to share what is happening with you as you notice and imagine things.

We experimented with staying in the experience and hence owning your experience (aligned with Circling) and with making explicit our projections using "noticing I imagine ..." (aligned with Circling).

Why we trained this

The Noticing game guides and trains you in being present with the other and yourself, in owning your experience, and it tends to show you deeply relate with this other being in front of you in only a few open shares of your experience.

Hints and further training

We invite you to take on the habit of checking whether you are owning your experience by asking yourself "can the other realistically deny that what I said is true?".

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) captures a lot of this. The NVC lists of feelings <<http://www.cnvc.org/Training/feelings-inventory>> you can have I found especially useful. Simple, though often not easy, and very much worth it in my opinion.

One specific warning sign I want to point out: "I feel like..." more often is the start of an un-owned projection, not the feeling it masquerades as. Be careful when you hear that!

Curiosity game

My favorite of the games. You can informally bring this to the rest of your interactions too. I now practice asking only questions I am genuinely interested in, during dates, in chance meetings on the street, in work situations. I found this brings oh so much more connection in all areas of my life.

Rules:

- You pair up. One of you (A) is going to ask the other questions.
- The person who is answering (B) can answer as usual in life: preferably truthful or declining to answer, or just lie.
- The person A who asks the questions only ask questions (s)he is genuinely curious about.

We expanded with

- Having the person who is answering (B) give feedback in the form of “the question I’d loved you had asked is ...”, or more spicy “the question I was afraid you would ask is ...”.
- Allowing the person who asks the questions (A) to interrupt with a “thank you”, when their curiosity was met.
- Suggesting the person who is answering (B) not answer the question if (s)he did not have the impression it was coming from curiosity, choosing to answer with returning to their experience right now (as from the Noticing game).

We experimented with asking questions from curiosity (aligned with Circling), asking questions you already know the answer to (not aligned with Circling, unless you are checking), asking questions and listening as if the answer is wrong (not aligned with Circling) and listening to the answers as if they were your truth (not aligned with Circling) as if their answer would be your greatest insight (good practice aligned with Circling, provided you stay connected to yourself).

Why we trained this

The point of Circling is to co-explore the experience of being in relationship, of the other, of yourself, of what happens in that dance. The Curiosity game trains connecting to your natural curiosity about the other, gives a sense of the magic that occurs if the focus is on one person as it is in Circling, can be a training ground for connecting to self/other/relationship, showcases that the chain of questions do not need to make sense, that you can jump topics at any time, and that returning to the experience right now is easy and opens all that richness of Circling immediately again.

Hints and further training

We invite you to take on to only ask questions you are curious about. Give yourself the room to jump topics as your curiosity jumps focus. I hope you’ll notice that, as long as you come from genuine curiosity and wonderful acceptance of them as they are, this is welcomed and goes deep fast.

A magical component to this game, one Circling shares, is keeping the focus on one person. Resist the temptation to make it a tit-for-tat question exchange.

Circling

The Circling process has the following structure:

1. *Set context.* The context provides a container for the Circling process. What are the (meta-)goals, if any? How long is it going to take? Who is keeping time? Who is the center of the circle? What external influences do we acknowledge as coming into the Circle?
2. *Connect to self:* Circling builds on presence, on mindfulness, so that everyone can notice what their own experience is. In the connecting to self step, some time is taken to bring the attention fully to yourself and the current moment. We did this with a short guided meditation (a few minutes) with the eyes closed. I prefer breath meditation for this.
3. *Connect to other:* Circling is an inter-subjective practice, the juice is in the connection and where the whole things goes. Explicitly connecting to everyone (looking everyone in the circle in the eye) starts off this connection.
4. *Weave shared reality:* A large part of the Circling was in this step, where together the experiences are co-discovered and shared, using the tools learned in the Noticing and the Curiosity games:
 - a. *Owning your experience* with “notice, imagine, feel”
 - b. *Staying in the here and now* with questions and answers about the current experience, not stories
 - c. *Following your natural curiosity* and keeping the focus on the center of the Circle.
5. *Iterate:* If at any point the process gets stuck, revisit the any earlier points and continue.
6. *Complete and close the context:* The circle is completed with something that offers some closure. We’ve used the “wind in the leaves” to allow the Circle to reflect what they had gotten about the center of the Circle.
7. *Review:* The facilitators reviewed what was and what wasn’t so much aligned with pure Circling, with discussion and training about Circling as part of it.

P.S.

A full 6 years after I closed down Authentic Europe, this there was still an interest for the hand outs and other writings I made for it, so I decided to redistribute them on [Wouter.org](https://wouter.org).

I love to point you to the folks over at [Authentic Revolution https://www.authrev.org](https://www.authrev.org), they have excellent resources (such as the Authentic Relating Games Manual, online training, and interesting writings).

*Stay together friends
Don't scatter and sleep
Our friendship is made
of being awake
...
Stay here, quivering with each moment
Like a drop of mercury*

Rumi