

## CHARTING THE CIRCLE

### To identify people who will be good planning circle members.

Everyone counts on many kinds of support from other people to get through the day. The people we count on and the people we can call on are especially important when we want to make an important change in our lives. Stopping to think about connections identifies people to invite into the planning circle.

One sort of relationship is not better than another. There are more possibilities when some are close and others are connected by weaker ties. Each relationship offers the possibility of exchanging emotional support, ideas, information, encouragement, and many kinds of practical help.

There are no right or wrong ways to identify connections. Some people include those they have not seen for a long time. Some people include those who no longer share their physical world. Some people include four footed beings or winged beings. Sometimes people don't fit neatly in a single circle. If this happens, adjust the chart to make it look right to you.



TIPS

### Steps to identify planning circle members

- ❑ Think of those close to your heart; those you can hardly imagine living without. Identify them in the circle closest to you, the circle of intimacy.
- ❑ Think of those you count as true friends; those who each hold an important part of your personal story; those you can call on and count on; those who can call on and count on you. Identify them in the circle of friendship.
- ❑ Think of those you meet –or have met– because you belong to a particular association, or work in a specific place, or live in a particular neighborhood. You share some time or activity or interest. You might call or be called on for engagement in projects related to your shared association or interest or for information or for connections to others. Identify them in the circle of participation.
- ❑ Think of those you count on because they provide a paid service to you. Identify them in the circle of economic exchange.
- ❑ Look at the whole chart and note the people you want to invite into the planning circle.

» Some people set a place for those who cannot be physically present. They may add a chair to the circle for the meeting, or they may bring an object as a sign of the person's presence. They may introduce the absent person or ask someone else to do so.

» Most planning circles bring 12 or fewer people together, though many more people may be engaged at the action stage. If the planning circle is larger, be sure to plan for the group's comfort, ways of being involved, and coordination.

» If you decide to make a planning circle smaller, balance diversity of knowledge and connections with closeness to the focus person.