

The Friendship Circle

One of the first challenges for a YCW group is to be more attentive to their family, friends and neighbours, to be interested in their lives, to care about their lives. This means listening to them and giving them time and space. A practical way of doing this is with the **“Friendship Circle”**. This is a simple diagram which shows who are the significant people in their life and invites them to respond more consciously and attentively to them. This tool encourages the young people in the group to open their eyes to the people in their life, to take them into greater account, and little by little to love them.

At the outset it is often the life of a friend which arouses strong feelings; for example the desire to help a friend out of a difficulty. We become attentive. We listen. We learn how to get to know and understand someone. This changes something within us. We have to make space within ourselves in order to allow the life of a friend to become important to us. We can no longer remain indifferent. This way of looking at things opens us up and this way of listening makes us grow and discover other insights, other cultures, other worlds. (Path to Leadership)

How to use “the Friendship Circle”

1. The members of the group each complete the “Circle” diagram putting in the first names of people they are in regular contact with at school, in their family, in their social/leisure time in their neighbourhood. This can be done on the sheet provided or simply in a notebook.
2. They then ask the questions: How well do I know them? How can I get to know them better?
3. Choose one or two people in the Circle and ask the further question: “How can I be of help to him/her this week? How can I bring some good, some light into his/her life?”

This exercise can be done personally, quietly and reflectively at the beginning of the meeting before the prayer so that the people in the “Circle” can be remembered in prayer and be taken in to account in the discussion on the reality of young people’s lives.

Alternatively the Friendship Circle can form the main part of the meeting in which the group discuss the content of their Circle and share ideas about their response. As the meetings progress, group members share the things which are happening in the lives of their friends and contacts including their hopes and needs. Over time this may lead up to the point where they might like to invite friends to a meeting, to take part in some action, or to come to a special event.

