A Gen2Gen Circle is an informal gathering of people (it can be groups of people 50+ or of different ages) designed to connect older adults to community-based opportunities that help children and youth thrive.

Gen2Gen Circle participants share stories about the benefits and challenges of building cross-generational connections and inspire each other to take action to help kids thrive. This guide is designed to help you host your own Gen2Gen Circle.

Sample Circle Host Agenda

Total time: around 90 minutes

WELCOME (5 minutes)

- Welcome guests as they arrive.
- Ask guests to sign in and get settled (sample sign in sheet can be found at the end of this guide.)

GEN2GEN CIRCLE OVERVIEW (10 minutes)

- Briefly introduce yourself and your personal story/connection to Gen2Gen’s mission.
- Review the agenda quickly and ask for questions.
- Explain the Gen2Gen circle: The circle is for anyone interested in helping create a web of adult support to help children and youth thrive. We will explore how everyone here can get connected to or create their own opportunity to help children and youth thrive. We are also here to share stories about our relationships with people much older and younger than us -- and how they have impacted us.
- Introduce the concept of storytelling and why it’s so powerful for moving people to action: You may be wondering why we are spending the first part of the circle sharing stories about the intergenerational relationships we have made in our lives and how they have shaped us. In addition to helping us get to know each other better, we believe that telling our stories can inspire us to move into action and invest in our community’s children and youth. Research tells us that our brains are wired for stories and that in general we become motivated to step up and make change not through learning about facts and figures but through listening to stories and having experiences that move and motivate us. I believe that each of us here has a story to tell about a connection with someone much older or much younger than us that helped us in our lives that can inspire others to work towards building connections across generations and ensuring that every child in our community has a web of support.
PROTIPS:
- Have the agenda written up and visible to everyone. You can do this on a big piece of flip chart paper or with photocopied handouts.
- Practice your story in advance so you can get it down to 3 minutes. Great stories have a beginning, middle and end and include visual and emotional details.

REFLECTION AND STORY-SHARING (10-15 minutes)
- Instruct participants: Think of a challenge that you faced in which you were helped out by a much older or much younger person. What did they do to help you? How did things change for you as a result? Or think about a much older or much younger person whom you helped out in some way. What did you do to support that person -- how did their life and your life change as a result?
- Have participants turn to the person next to them and briefly share their story.
- Both people in the pair should have the opportunity to share. After one person tells their story, the partner who is listening will provide feedback for one minute about something in the story that drew them in and why.

PROTIPS:
- Make sure to remind others to keep their stories to a 3 minute time limit.
- Set a timer for 3 minutes for storytelling and 1 minute for feedback. Ask people to switch once the time is up. Feel free to gently let people know if they need to wrap up their story.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL INVOLVEMENT (15 minutes)
- Use the story exercise to introduce volunteer opportunities. Example: Having a web of caring adults was so important to many of us as children. Every child in this community deserves that web of support, and adults over 50 can play an important and unique role in that web. We have some people here today to share some opportunities for how you can help ensure that older generations are more connected in this community and that every child has a strong web of support. You might also have other ideas for how to get involved that you can share later on.
- Invite people who are involved in some kind of volunteer role for an organization to share what their role and commitment is like. The volunteer could be serving formally in an organization (i.e. reading in a library program) or informally in a less structured way in their community.
- Let the group members know they will have an opportunity to mingle after the group and sign up for opportunities.
PROTIP:
Prep the organizations and volunteer speakers in advance so that they speak for less than 5 minutes and share a personal story about what being involved in the program has meant to them. If a staff person vs. a volunteer is speaking, they can tell a story about a meaningful change they have seen as a result of the program.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION (15-20 minutes)
- Invite participants to ask questions and also share other ideas they may have about how older adults can get involved supporting children and youth. Write these ideas up on a large sheet of paper.
- Open the floor for questions or comments. Invite people who are already volunteering to invite others to join them, or to raise challenges they have encountered for group feedback and support.

PROTIP:
If you don’t have an answer to someone’s question, that’s fine! Refer them to the Gen2Gen campaign email at the bottom of this guide for help.

CLOSING (10-15 minutes)
- Thank everyone for participating.
- Go around the circle and have each person share one thing they plan to do to support youth in the next month. Alternatively, you could hand out the Gen2Gen “We believe” statement found at the end of this guide and ask each person to share the line that most resonates with them and why.
- Optional: Encourage participants from the group to host their own Gen2Gen Circle. Send interested participants the Facilitator’s Guide and offer to meet with them to share your experience as a host.

SIGN UP AND MINGLE (15-20 minutes)
- Thank everyone for coming and invite people to stick around and mingle to get to know each other better.
- Thank all the speakers who shared about available volunteer opportunities. Invite them to stay to answer questions and collect contact information from interested participants.

We want to hear how your circle went! If you have used this guide, please send us an email and let us know: akhauv@encore.org
Gen2Gen Circle Frequently Asked Questions

Where should I hold the circle?
Any place that is easily accessible, where people will feel comfortable going (by walking, driving or other public transportation). Some examples include: libraries, places of worship, community centers, senior centers, or schools. Depending on your comfort level, you might consider hosting it at your home. Make sure you talk with the person in charge of the space and get them excited about the event as well. It helps to have them in your corner! Check dates with the person in charge- some centers/libraries require you to book their space a month or more in advance. Put up clear signs to direct people to the space.

Who should I invite?
You can invite anyone interested in increasing connections across generations and helping create a web of support for children and youth, anchored by the unique contributions of older people. This may include people who have retired and are looking for ways to give back, those considering what's next after their midlife stage of work, young people looking for older mentors, younger families who would like to bring in an extra layer of caring adults for their children, etc. Also invite people who currently volunteer for existing formal and/or informal programs supporting youth. Prepare them in advance to tell their story about volunteering with young people or organizing their own project to help kids thrive, using this tool. You might also invite program staff from those youth-serving organizations to help with the signup process at the end. You can modify the invitation to invite volunteers and staff to participate in the Gen2Gen Circle.

Where can I find people?
Mine your own networks: Ask your inner circle of friends, family and colleagues to attend your Gen2Gen Circle. Ask your inner circle to invite people in their networks to attend as well. Consider groups that you and/or your inner circle have connections with. Ask your inner circle if they belong to any groups you could come speak to or they could speak to on your behalf:
- Civic, social, or professional groups
- University alumni groups/fraternities and sororities
- Faith-based organizations and groups
- Culturally specific organizations
How do I get people to come?
Create a flyer with general information about your circle, using the template at the end of this guide, but there's no replacement for face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact -- even an old-fashioned snail mail note -- especially for people who aren’t “digital natives.” If you are hosting your circle at a community center or library with a regular newsletter, ask them to include information about your event in the next issue or in their online calendar of events. Check for submission deadlines. Contact your neighborhood association to get your event posted in their online listing of monthly events. Local elected officials also often have newsletter blasts they send to their constituents and colleagues where you might be able to promote your event.

As you recruit for your circle, you can:
- **Listen**: Relationships always start with listening. Ask people’s opinions and really listen to what they have to say.
- **Inform**: Make a case for why people should come to the Gen2Gen Circle by sharing stories that resonate with their motivations.
- **Involve**: Get people involved in small tasks organizing the circle (i.e. bring one person, bring food, come early to set up, or stay afterwards to clean up.)
- **Inspire**: Ask them to consider sharing their own story at the circle.

It’s a good idea to start recruiting 3-4 weeks before your event and best to remind people by phone or email a week before the event and then again the day before. Include an easy way for them to contact you with questions. Generally invite more people than you need as it is likely some people will not show up.

How do I set up the space?
Set up the chairs in a circle. It can be helpful, but not necessary, to have a big flip chart paper or whiteboard next to you in the circle to record people’s ideas.

What materials do I need to prepare for the event?
- Gen2Gen Circle agenda and “We believe” statement -- these can be on a large sheet of paper or photocopied for each participant.
- Signs that clearly indicate where the circle is being held.
- Sign-in sheet to collect people’s names and emails.
- Name tags (optional).
- Flipchart or whiteboard and markers (optional).
- You might have a few simple snacks and beverages prepared, or you can ask participants to bring something to eat or drink (optional).
What are some ways to adapt the Gen2Gen Circle model?
There are many possible ways to adapt the circle model! For example, instead of inviting people who are involved in some kind of volunteer role for an organization in the “opportunities for involvement” section, you could...

- Discuss a collective project that your group wants to organize. Check out the DIY section on the Gen2Gen website for some examples: http://generationtogeneration.org/take-action/#diy
- Encourage participants to donate money (a giving circle) to support a local school, scholarship fund or youth service organization.

Still have questions?
Email akhauv@encore.org
You are invited to a GEN2GEN CIRCLE

Connect with others in the community who believe all children deserve a web of support and all older people have something to give.

Find out about local opportunities for adults 50+ to help youth thrive!

WHERE:

WHEN:

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:

Join the national campaign: www.iamGen2Gen.org
Gen2Gen Circle
Sign-in Sheet

Date: ______________

We hope this gathering will inspire you to host your own Gen2Gen Circle! If you haven’t done so yet, please join the Generation to Generation campaign via [www.iamGen2Gen.org](http://www.iamGen2Gen.org) to find out how to get involved and connect with others.

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