

Growth Circles

is a great warm up/get to know you activity that I use with almost every group.

Growth Circles are three large concentric circles on the ground (use rope, webbing, tape, chalk, paint - whatever works for you). Tell the group the circles represent how you feel about something. "If you feel uncomfortable, stand in the outer circle. If feel so-so about it, stand in the second circle. If you feel completely comfortable with it, stand in the inner circle." This can be used to learn a lot of different things about a group and what they are willing to do.

TIPS:

- I like to use red, yellow and green webbing or rope.
- I like to start by setting up a metaphor. I ask what other thing to they commonly see in their world with those colors. The response is "a stop light." We then review what each color represents on a stop light. After they all laugh about yellow meaning "go really fast" (happens in *every* group), I make sure they understand that is really means "caution."
 - We stand in the red to show that the topic or activity mentioned makes us feel very uncomfortable or "freaks us out!"
 - We stand in the yellow to show that the topic or activity mentioned makes us feel a little uncomfortable or "so-so."
 - We stand in the green to show that the topic or activity mentioned is easy for us.
- This activity works well for identifying how group members have similar feelings about each other, but can be used for much more.
 - I often use it to find out how group members feel about working with others (how do you feel about working with a partner that you get to choose, how do you feel about working in a group of four that you get to pick, how do you feel about working in a group of four that your teacher picks...)
 - Teachers have told me that they use this activity as a pre-test review or check on whether student are ready for a test (How to you feel about multiplying fractions...).
 - I like to point out that we can use this activity to show when we are ready to learn something. This is like "edgework" detailed in *Processing the Experience* by Nadler and Luckner (on the recommended reading list on the website).
 - You will not learn when you are in the red, because you are too freaked out.
 - You will not learn anything when you are in the green, because you are in the green as a result of knowing how to do the activity/task and/or are comfortable with it.

- You learn when you are in the yellow where you don't really know how to do something, but are not too scared to try.
 - The possibilities are endless!
- When doing the "Yurt Circle" (another activity that I do with almost every group which can be found in the Trust Activity section on the website), I like to use the yellow Growth Circle webbing because we have already established that it represents "caution."

Equipment:

I personally have two sets of Growth Circles made of one inch tubular webbing. This can be ordered online through, or purchased at a store, that sells rock climbing equipment like REI. I use green, yellow and red as mentioned above. Green is the smallest and in the center, then yellow is the middle size, and red the largest and the outer circle. Many people have asked how big to make them. It really depends on what you plan to do, how big your group is, and how big your space is.

I have one set in a size that I feel works fine for a typical classroom where the student desks have been moved to the perimeter of the room leaving a space in the middle of the floor. When the circles are placed in the middle of the space there is enough room for a class sized group to stand around the outside of the largest circle, and about 18-24 inches of space between the concentric circles providing adequate space for students to stand. The other set is larger and used in a gym or outside for larger groups.

I used good old geometry to figure out how long each piece of webbing should be (you know from high school: $\text{circumference} = 2\pi r$). *Here is what I ended up with:

Classroom size set approximate sizes

Green: diameter ~ 5.5 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **17 feet**

Yellow: diameter ~ 9.5 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **30 feet**

Red: diameter ~ 13 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **40 feet**

Gym or outdoor size set approximate sizes

Green: diameter ~ 7.5 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **23 feet**

Yellow: diameter ~ 11.5 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **36 feet**

Red: diameter ~ 16 feet, circumference (or length of webbing) ~ **50 feet**

*It was a long time ago so I don't really remember, but the sizes, especially the larger set, may have just been based on how much webbing I had available to me at the time. Think about it and use the formula to figure out what would work best for you.