BEN FRANKLIN CIRCLES

Toolkit

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE. TRANSFORM YOUR WORLD.

Steps for launching your own Ben Franklin Circle

Tips for structuring your first circle meeting

Tips for organizing future meetings

More ideas for getting the most out of your circle

What are Ben Franklin Circles?

The Ben Franklin Circles are a bold initiative that brings people together in face-to-face salons driven by two simple goals:

1 **TO HELP US IMPROVE OURSELVES**

2 **TO HELP US IMPROVE OUR WORLD**

Cirlces meet regularly, using Ben Franklin's classic 13 virtues to spark discussion about members' goals and aspirations — who they want to be, and what they want to contribute to the world.

Why Ben Franklin?

Founding father, master inventor: Benjamin Franklin was also a pioneer of self-improvement. In 1727 Franklin formed the Junto, a weekly **mutual-improvement club** made up of individuals with an array of interests and skills.

WHAT ARE THE 13 VIRTUES?

temperance / silence / order / resolution / frugality / industry / sincerity

justice / moderation / cleanliness / tranquility / chastity / humility.

Now, almost 300 years later, the Ben Franklin Circles are revisiting and redefining these virtues—as tools to enrich our own lives and our communities today.

How do I launch my own Ben Franklin Circle?

You have the passion and the purpose.
All you need now is the people and the protocol.
So here are six steps for starting a Ben Franklin Circle
dedicated to personal and social change.

1

PICK A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP

- We recommend groups of eight to 12
- Create a rich mix of ages, backgrounds, perspectives, experiences
- Not everyone has to know each other—let new people come together

2

FIND THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE

- We recommend meeting once a month for a couple of hours
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, inviting location

3

REACH OUT TO YOUR MEMBERS

- Tell them why you're starting a Ben Franklin Circle
- Send them a list of Franklin's 13 virtues
- Direct them to Ben Franklin Circles website so they can learn more

4

REVIEW OUR TOOKIT AS YOU PREPARE

- Choose your circle facilitator—it can be you or someone else
- Check out our tips for structuring your first meeting

5

KICK OFF WITH A CALL TO ACTION

- Pick your first virtue and send it to your members in advance
- How does this virtue apply to their lives and the world?

6

CREATE A CONVERSATION-CONDUCIVE SPACE

- Set the tone for a relaxing atmosphere
- Let people know that what they say is confidential
- Have food, have wine, have fun

How do I structure my first BFC meeting?

You have your members. You've found the perfect time and place. You've assigned your initial virtue. It's time for your first Ben Franklin Circle meeting. **Here's a simple, six-step structure.**

1

INTRODUCE YOURSELVES

- Get to know each other
- What does everyone do? What are they passionate about?

2

TALK ABOUT THE CIRCLE AND EXPECTATIONS

- Discuss Ben Franklin's original mutual-improvement club, his 13 virtues and how they can be applied to contemporary goals and aspirations
- Set ground rules: confidentiality, commitment, respect

3

DIVIDE YOUR MEETING INTO SECTIONS

One successful format is:

- **First 40 minutes**: focus on your first assigned virtue
  - What does it mean? How has everyone applied it? How can this be scaled?
- **Second 40 minutes**: shift to next month's virtue
  - What is this virtue about? How will we commit to it?
- **Final 40 minutes**: ask each other a series of Franklin-inspired questions

4

KEEP THE CONVERSATION ACTIVE AND ENGAGED

- Ask neutral "why" questions to go deeper
- Tell personal stories
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues

5

SET UP DIGITAL COMMUNICATION FOR THE CIRCLE

- Stay connected between meetings
- Email, text, Google, Facebook, WhatsApp—pick what works

6

ASK ABOUT ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

- Do people want to pair up with partners to track monthly progress?

REPEAT!

How do I structure future BFC meetings?

You've had your first meeting, and you're ready for your circle to move forward. So let's dive a little deeper into the helpful **three-part format** you may wish to use for your Ben Franklin Circle meeting.

1

THE RECAP: LAST MONTH'S VIRTUE (40 MINS)

- Did you achieve your commitments around this virtue?
- Did your understanding of the virtue change over the month?
- How can we apply what we've learned to our communities?

2

LOOKING AHEAD: NEXT MONTH'S COMMITMENTS (40 MINS)

- How do we interpret next month's virtue?
- In what concrete ways will we commit to pursuing this virtue?
- What challenges may arise, and how can we support each other?

3

CONNECTING WITH THE WORLD: WHOM CAN WE HELP AND HOW? (40 MINS)

A set of questions based on those Franklin and his club asked one another

- Is there something you need help with?
- Is anyone here starting a new project? Is there a way we can help?
- Anyone who's doing innovative work?
- Is there anyone whose friendship we want?
- How can we use our networks to help each other?
- Is there anyone we can mentor and encourage?
- Can we give one another any personal/professional advice?
- Can we improve anything about the circle itself?
- Are there ways the circle should be connecting with and contributing to nearby communities?

How can I get the most out of my circle?

Congrats: your Ben Franklin Circle is up and running. You're talking about the virtues and applying them to your lives and the world. Here are some final **thoughts to keep in mind.**

1

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CIRCLE FACILITATOR?

- You're comfortable leading a conversation about life's big issues
- You're a good listener who can ask questions and get others to share
- You're able to manage time and keep meetings on track
- You're ready to see the circle through to its natural conclusion

2

GROUND RULES

- Everything shared in the circle is confidential
- Don't judge others' commitments—offer constructive feedback
- Attend the meetings—your fellow members are counting on you

3

AND DON'T FORGET...WE'RE LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER - SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES!

- **Document your meetings**
  - If everyone approves, share or send us photos, short videos, blog posts, etc.
- **Take notes**
  - Assign a different note taker at each meeting
  - After meetings, send a short wrap-up email including members' commitments
- **We're here for you!**
  - Check back on the Ben Franklin Circles website for news and new content
  - Reach out with questions, and join our discussion group for circle leaders

4

MOST IMPORTANT: WHAT NOW?

- Turn your inner knowledge into outward action
- How can we use what we've learned about ourselves to better our world?

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR BEN FRANKLIN CIRCLE!

13 virtues - as defined by Ben Franklin

Here's how Franklin defined his virtues in the 18th century. Your circle can update them for life today.

1 **TEMPERANCE**
Eat not to dullness and drink not to elevation.

2 **SILENCE**
Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.

3 **ORDER**
Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.

4 **RESOLUTION**
Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.

5 **FRUGALITY**
Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e. Waste nothing.

6 **INDUSTRY**
Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.

7 **SINCERITY**
Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8 **JUSTICE**
Wrong none, by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9 **MODERATION**
Avoid extremes. Forebear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10 **CLEANLINESS**
Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes or habitation.

11 **CHASTITY**
Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; Never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

12 **TRANQUILITY**
Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

13 **HUMILITY**
Imitate Jesus and Socrates.