

# Talking Circles: The Art of Communication for Physician Leaders

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# Talking Circles: The Art of Communication for Physician Leaders

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## Talking Circles -

### *Leadership Development Opportunity*


High potential physician leaders identified a need for a confidential group forum to communicate challenging leadership issues and receive coaching from peers and senior executives.

## What is a Talking Circle?

- Promotes active listening and problem solving
- Values respect for others and honors collective wisdom
- Encourages participants to speak freely from the heart about what is on their mind
- Utilizes talking stick to facilitate communication

## Guidelines for Creating Safe Space

- Acknowledge that all members are equal and belong to the circle
- Commit to keeping all that is shared in the circle confidential
- Set an intention to open your heart to understand and connect with others
- Express points of view or comments in a nonjudgmental way
- Be respectful of others and listen without interruption
- Be open to silence



*“Give me the courage to share, and the courage to listen. It is a native tradition to sit in a circle and talk—to share what is in your heart.”*

John Peters (Slow Turtle), medicine man of the Mashpee Wampanoag Indian tribe



## How Does the Talking Circle Work at LVHN?

- Facilitator (senior executive) opens talking circle, leads introduction process and reviews creating safe space guidelines
- Participants (physicians) reflect on current leadership challenges and agree upon one for discussion
- Facilitator gives talking stick to participant who volunteered topic
- Participant presents challenge and request of the circle
- Talking stick is passed to the left until each person in the circle is offered the opportunity to share their point of view (interruptions not permitted)
- Facilitator provides high level summary of what was discussed, shares additional insights and places the talking stick in the center of the circle for open discussion
- Facilitator provides final remarks after open discussion and closes circle

## Impact of Talking Circles at LVHN

- Averaged 4.7 out of 5 (very great) level of satisfaction
- Problem solving around leadership issues—healthcare reform, employee morale and satisfaction, LEAN implementation, balance of administrative/clinical responsibilities
- Provided additional access to senior leadership
- Incorporated into high potential leadership development program curriculum