

Circle Time Solutions for Positive Playtimes by Therese Hoyle

What is Circle Time?

The Circle Time Programme provides for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students by developing a caring ethos, encouraging democratic values, positive relationships and behaviour, self-discipline, self-esteem and motivation.

In many schools Circle Time is used as an ongoing programme for building social skills where children can problem solve and support one another. It's a time where they also play games and have fun as well as discuss more challenging issues.

I am a huge advocate of Circle Time after having a very challenging situation early in my teaching career – it was the one system that really made the difference, it gave my children a voice, helped them to problem solve and develop empathy; it also reminded me why I went into teaching.

Because of the many benefits I saw I trained with many Circle Time and behaviour management experts all over the world and have for the last 20 years been training others.

My Powerfully Positive Playtime Masterclass includes Circle Time training because I believe it important that children have a voice about playtimes and I want them to know that we care and will listen to their ideas and support them with any of their playtime problems.

Playtime Problems

I have just spent much of last term in schools all over the country running Positive Playtime and Flourishing Schools Programmes and have talked with over 1000 children in Circle Time about what's going well with playtimes as well as their worries and concerns.

Their worries fall into the following categories:

- Friendship – lack of friends, being left out of games, asking to play a game and being told 'no' they can't join in, friends being unkind and arguing.
- Lack of things to do – boredom stemming from not enough equipment or things to do in the playground.
- Feeling unsafe - physical and verbal aggression

With Ofsted requirements around safeguarding, pupil behaviour, discipline, child welfare, quality teaching and learning, creating a safe, nurturing and harmonious school is vital to our children achieving their potential.

As educators we all want our children to be safe and to learn and we aren't always aware of the emotional barriers to learning.



So how can we support our children with their playtime problems?

I use a Circle Time structure which creates safety and continuity and gives a planning format for teachers. Below is the Therese Hoyle's C.I.R.C.L.E™ structure.

C. Circle Time Ground Rules and Skills

I. Introductory Activity

R. Round – Time to Talk

C. Conference for Communication and Problem Solving

L. Let's Endorse to Energise

E. Ending Activity

Step 1. Timetable a C.I.R.C.L.E™ meeting once a week at a fixed time so that children feel safe and secure in the knowledge that, as a class, their voices will be heard and problems solved weekly. This will typically last between 20 and 45 minutes. **Create Ground Rules** with the children such as they cannot name anyone in a negative way, they are respectful of each other's ideas, listen and don't interrupt.

Step 2. Introduce activities and teach children new games that can be played in the playground as well as at wet playtimes.

Step 3. Round – a 'speaking object' is used, such as a teddy or wooden egg. This is a symbol of speaking and listening with each person having the opportunity to talk when they are holding the 'speaking object' and the others listening to them. Children can say pass.

During the round you have a good opportunity to find out the children's worries and concerns and the things that are going well at playtime.

Good sentence stems for Rounds are:

- I don't like it at playtime when...
- I was kind at playtime when...
- I was happy at playtime because...
- My best playtimes are when...
- When I am playing a game and win/lose I feel...
- When my friend is sad/happy at playtime I would...
- A good friend is someone who...

Step 4. Conference for Communication and Problem Solving – this is a great time to sort out playtime conflicts and problems and for children to develop conflict resolution skills.

Step 5. Let's Endorse to Energise – is a way of finishing your meeting in a positive way. The teacher asks if there is anyone they are pleased with because they have been kind/thoughtful/played well with others or have let others join in their games for example. The children then cross the circle and thank the chosen person.

Do you suffer from a stream of children coming to you with playtime problems after lunch or playtime?

If so you need to try the 'Good News Game'.

Tell children before they go out to play that you want to hear all their good news when they come back in, for example who

played with them, who they invited to play their games and who was kind or helpful. Their focus will then be on thinking about all the good news they can share with you after play!

When they come back into the classroom, sit them in a circle on the carpet and ask who would like to start the 'good news' round. That person is then given the 'speaking object' and tells the class their good playtime news. This is an uplifting exercise and the reverse psychology works a treat!

I have touched briefly on the use of Circle Time in this article and would be happy to talk to you further if you are interested in developing this work.

'Therese Hoyle's Circle Time Programme helped change the culture in our school. Exclusions have gone from eight to one in

two years, while detention rates have halved. The number of serious cases requiring major intervention by the principal was 34 in the first term plummeting to just 11 for the whole of last year.'

Brent Caldwell, Headteacher, Musselburgh Primary School

Thérèse Hoyle is bestselling author of 101 Playground Games and 101 Wet Playtime Games and Activities. She runs Positive Playtime, Circle Time and the Flourishing Schools Programmes nationally and internationally. If you wish to develop her ideas further please read her books, available from Edventure, or contact her direct for in-depth advice on designing and developing your playground.

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Available from Edventure:

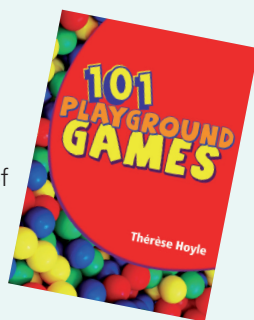
101 Playground Games

by Therese Hoyle

A comprehensive collection of traditional and new playground games. Well researched, it recognises the importance of children's experiences in the school playground and provides a practical toolkit of ideas to promote lively and enjoyable games for playtime.

- Age: 5-11
- A4, photocopiable, includes CD-Rom

19000: **£35.95** each



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101 Wet Playtime Games and Activities

by Therese Hoyle

A follow-up to the successful 101 Playground Games, this book is packed with activities, games, structures for behaviour management and ideas to create a happy, calm, stimulating and socially enjoyable wet playtime.

- Age: 5-11
- A4, photocopiable, includes CD-Rom

19010: **£35.95** each



Powerfully Positive Playtime Training

Simple effective playtime solutions

On our training days you will learn to:

- ✓ Develop a positive and effective lunchtime and playtime policy
- ✓ Play a variety of new and traditional playground games
- ✓ Establish or re-energise the Playground Activity Leaders (PALS) System and/or Peer Mediators
- ✓ Develop effective positive behaviour management systems
- ✓ Create zoned activity areas
- ✓ Improve Wet Play
- ✓ Create calm dining halls
- ✓ Enhance morale and team spirit

What schools say about our training

"The biggest impact of our training with Therese Hoyle has been the sense of pride and purpose, feeling of being valued and ownership our MDSA's have taken with what goes on at lunchtimes.

They are now more motivated, engaged in playing games with the children, have set up zoned activity areas and Playtime Buddies.

As a result the children are being more tolerant, friendly and kind to one another which has led to a marked reduction in incidents of poor behaviour and fewer first aid incidents at lunchtimes."

Natalie Rankin, Deputy Headteacher, ARK Blacklands Primary Academy, Hastings.

We offer affordable, quality training and workshops. If you'd like to explore taking your playtimes and lunchtimes to the next level, call us today on **0800 311 8991**.



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