



Student Open Circles

Perspectives Newsletter – March 2017

New series helps students to “become themselves”

70 students are participating in our new Becoming Yourself series of small group workshops and individual mentoring this year! When I told one of our student leaders that more students than ever are getting involved in Open Circle, she responded by saying, “That makes sense. I think my generation is realizing that the way things have been done isn’t working. We’re looking for another way.” We continued to talk about how the current world turmoil may be bringing this quest for more to the surface. In this letter, students reflect on how the Becoming Yourself series helps them to live authentically in their day-to-day lives and to make a life-giving difference in the world around them. As Alison says, this wouldn’t be possible without your support. Thank you for your partnership with us!

Maybeth & Jeff

Seeking Balance for Mind, Body, and Soul by Alison Arden



As a graduate student who is enrolled in a demanding Nurse Practitioner program, I was drawn to Open Circles as an outlet which was a different pace and focus than the hectic, deadline-filled schedule that I had grown accustomed to. Given that I perpetually felt as though I was running on empty, I knew that my life was seeking balance and changes needed to be made. Although I was devoting myself to my studies, I was not as focused on ensuring that my mind, body, and soul were being nurtured.

Being in health care, I had always had an interest in and appreciated the value that meditation could have on the body. What drew me to Open Circles was the focus on self-care, mindfulness, gratitude, and being the best version of yourself. I noticed that over the course of the 5 week session, I learned some very valuable tools to help guide me through life, to live more authentically and holistically. The use of journaling helped me keep track of my thoughts and my progress throughout the weekly sessions.

Overall, I am so thankful for the opportunity to participate in the Open Circles sessions. I am taking away some valuable practices, meditation exercises, and am approaching life and my studies in a more grounded, positive, and gracious manner. Programs such as these are so important for students of all disciplines and I am so thankful for the generous support of the sponsors and donors, as without your assistance, programs like these would not be able to run. This program has been a blessing and I am noticing that the skills I’ve developed as a result of Open Circles will be applicable not only to enhance my academic success, but my personal and professional life as well, so thank you!

Winter Retreat: a weekend of community-building and reflection



How My Life Changed by a 3rd year Medical Sciences PhD student

The Becoming Yourself Series has been a truly a life-changing experience for me. In the midst of a chaotic week, being present at the weekly sessions is a welcomed escape. I have a safe space to share my story with like-minded people and our wonderfully welcoming host, Marybeth. More importantly, the questions we explore in the sessions provide the platform to connect with myself and to explore the motivations driving my decisions and behaviour. I owe much of my recent progress in mindfulness, gratitude, and my general sense of peace to this series and more broadly, to Open Circle.

Marybeth cultivates a dynamic balance between reflection and growth, and facilitates vulnerability within a safe space. It's through her guidance that I feel comfortable enough to explore ideas outside of my comfort zone and challenge myself to embrace new thinking patterns. Her follow-up questions, in particular, resonate with me and give me the sense that she is truly listening to each of our stories and is wholeheartedly engaged in her role with this series. I have nothing but gratitude toward Marybeth and all the behind-the-scenes contributors to Open Circle for facilitating the BYS series, for helping me to see that I am enough, and for encouraging me to implement these thinking patterns into action.

Finding Strength to be Vulnerable by Becoming Yourself student

The *Becoming Yourself Series* is a wonderful place to let the veneer of socially constructed behaviour fade. It's a place where I can sit and allow my fears, insecurities, and truths to surface without judgment. For me, this is such a rare and incredible experience. Anywhere I've ever been—at work or school, with family or friends—I've felt a sense of judgment if I tried to share my struggles. It's remarkable to me to find so many people who have similar struggles. It requires a certain amount of bravery and strength to open yourself up to these experiences, because we have been socialized to be ashamed of feelings of inadequacy, confusion, guilt, sadness and pain. Our society projects this idea that you should be happy 100% of the time.

I am so proud of those that decided to be vulnerable and embrace the beauty of all of their emotions and thoughts. That is true strength. I feel a wonderful grounding simply being in their presence because I know they are also seeking answers to similar questions. This process truly allows me to see just how many people are struggling with similar issues, and it is an eye-opening and wonderful realization. Most of us are looking for belonging, significance, purpose, and love. *Open Circle* and the *Becoming Yourself Series* provide a space for us to give that to one another through non-judgment and acceptance.

My hope and my wish is for others to take a leap of faith and join any of the *Open Circles*. The significance and beauty of your life is evidenced by the simple fact that you are here. You exist. You are a precious piece of this universe. And we see you.

Explore Your Community

An Online Auction in support of Student Open Circles



March 7 – 21

opens and closes @ 3pm

Bid online for restaurant gift certificates, art, live theatre, services and more!

www.StudentOpenCircles.com/auction

Student Open Circles

Canadian Charitable Registration 891444309 RR0001

How to Donate

Student Open Circles relies on the generosity of individuals and groups. To make a tax-receiptable donation, please make cheques payable to Student Open Circles. Online donations, automatic monthly support, and donations of stocks and mutual funds are available at our website. Jeff's CD's and Marybeth's art and greeting cards are available on our website, with all proceeds supporting Student Open Circles.

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