

# The Campfire

Andrew King  
0437 546 560  
info@groupworksolutions.com.au  
www.groupworksolutions.com.au

***Objective – The Campfire (King, 2011) involves writing a single or a few word/s (e.g. Family Law Court or Caring for self) on a large piece of paper and placing it in the centre of the group (on the floor). This process allows a purposeful, powerful and focused discussion with multiple opinions to emerge.***

Think about a common theme that has been a part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Part's discussion. Focus on the 'proactive and positive' topic rather than a 'powerless or negative' topic. If you cannot think of a theme, review the suggested themes in the next section and select one of them. Remember, the focus of the discussion is the direction people will move towards after the completion of the group. It is important for the discussion to move people towards positive coping responses regarding the challenges they experience.

Once a theme is selected, write it (handwrite the issue rather than having it pre-typed) on a piece of butchers' paper (large sheet of paper) that is then placed on the floor in the centre of the group with a variety of markers pens surrounding it. Ask the participants to:

*"Look at these words and in silence for 1-minute, I want you to think about your initial reaction or response as you look at those words. What is something important that you know about this issue?"*

It is important to allow the silence for people to reflect and value their own knowledge about the discussion topic. Their response maybe a drawing, image, a single word or short statement. Having the paper on the ground aids people's ability to reflect and think about the topic. After 1-minute has passed say:

*"I want you to come forward, and use these marker pens to write or draw your immediate response to this issue".*

The participants write in silence before discussing it. After leaving a short time for the responses to be written, ask people to share a reflection about what they or someone else has written on the paper. Other words or images can be added during the discussion. This process has been called a 'Campfire' and is a great alternative to brainstorming.

During the discussion:

- Keep the focus of the discussion on the words written on the paper rather than you as the group leader. This enables people to talk more openly and honestly about the issue.
- Ask questions like:
  - What else do you know about this word (topic)?
  - How does this word (these words) affect you?
  - What feelings go along with this word?
  - How does this word affect other people in your life?
  - What are some different ways of dealing with this issue?

# Sample Campfire Topics

## Campfire 1: Being child centred

Write the words 'Being child centred' on a piece of butchers' paper (large sheet of paper) and place it on the floor in the centre of the group with a variety of markers pens surrounding it. Ask the participants to:

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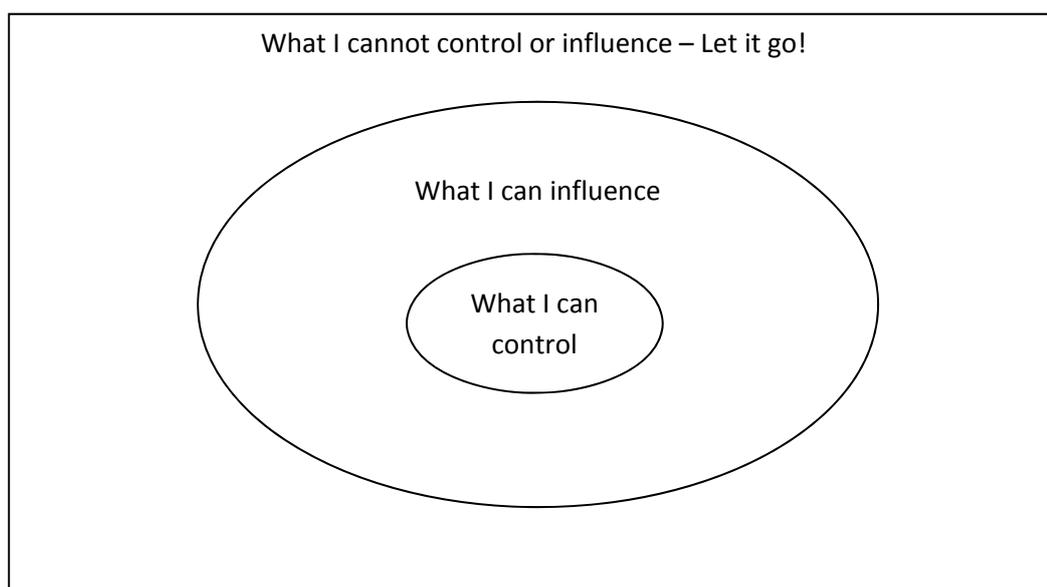
- Keep the focus of the discussion on the words 'Being child centred' written on the paper rather than you as the group leader. This enables people to talk more openly and honestly about the issue.
- Ask questions like:
  - What else do you know about these words?
  - How do these words affect you?
  - What feelings go along with these words?
  - How do these words affect other people in your life?
  - What is the difference between being child centred, being adult centred or being self-centred?
  - How do we respond differently to our children when we focus on 'being child centred'?
  - How do we respond differently to the 'mother of our children' when we focus on being child centred?
  - What are some different ways of being child centred in our actions?
  - What difference does it in our actions when we refer to the mother as 'the mother' or 'the mother of our children' rather than using the word 'ex'?

Handouts for participants: Nil

## Campfire 2: Control, influence and letting go circles...

This is an excellent Campfire to use to review a situation and accept what we can control, influence and need to let go of. This Campfire is a bit more complicated than the others in this manual, but it is well worth doing with individuals and groups.

On the butchers' paper, draw two circles using the same centre - a smallish circle in the centre with a larger circle on the outside. There should be a wide space left on the outside of the circles before the edge of the paper. In small print, write the words below in each of the specific areas.



Ask the participants to sit around the Campfire and **follow your instructions in silence.**

1. Ask them to write a word or a short statement in the smallest circle – *“What is something in your life that you can control”?*
2. Briefly discuss the difference between who issues people can control and influence (see below) in their life. Ask the participants to write a word or a short statement in the larger circle – *“What is something in your life that you can influence”?*
3. Briefly discuss what it means to not be able to control or influence an issue – you need to let it go. Ask the participants to write a word or a short statement outside of the larger circle – *“What is something in your life that you cannot control or influence”?*

Background:

- The things in your life you can control in a situation should only refer to themselves - their feelings, actions, thoughts etc. The small area is what can be controlled in life. It is in actual fact a very limited area. Anyone can only control what they wear,

where they go, who they spend time with and their own behaviour. **People do not have the right to control others!**

- The things in your life you can influence in a situation means that a person can have some impact but you cannot determine the ultimate outcome. It is larger than the 'area of control' yet it is still limited. Conflict in life is increased when people try to control what they can only influence or attempt to influence what is outside their control or influence.
- When attempting to control a situation or a person who is outside their influence and control, people have no choice but to use power. A person must force others to do what they want. **This force is violence.**
- To attempt to control a situation or someone that is outside someone's control and influence they must use some type of force or power:
  - Physical force – violence or the threat of
  - Intimidation - creating fear
  - Humiliation
  - Threats to do something or withdraw love and attention
  - Force of will
- Men often over estimate the amount they can control situations and issues.
- The more that power/force is used, often results in greater conflict and feelings of mistrust.
- This misguided attempted to control issues in our lives often occurs in family separation when separated fathers are in conflict with the mother of their children. Unless the children are in actual or potential danger, each parent has the right to attempt persuasion and to influence the other parent and no right to try to force their view of 'how things should be' on the other. If it is not going the way you want, learn how to 'let it go'.
- The things in your life you cannot control or influence in a situation means that you need to let go of these things as you cannot have an impact on them. This does not mean that they are less important but you cannot do anything about them at this immediate time.
- Although challenging, people must learn to let go what is outside of the areas of control and influence. A simple thing to say, yet in reality it is very challenging to let go.
- The skill involved with letting go does not mean forgetting or ignoring. Some letting go techniques are:
  - Focus on your control your breathing.
  - Acknowledge feelings but not treat them as a fact.
  - Acknowledge the important values and goals decided upon previously.
  - Hold on and remember significant connections in your life.

- It is of paramount importance for the wellbeing of relationships and oneself that people clearly differentiate between these three areas. Conflict results when one party attempts to control what is outside their control or influence.

There are now three distinct areas:

- Our Area of Control
- Our Area of Influence
- Outside our Control and Influence.

During the discussion:

- Keep the focus of the discussion on the 'circles' written on the paper rather than you as the group leader. This enables people to talk more openly and honestly about the issue.
- Ask questions like:
  - What does this diagram highlight to you?
  - How do you balance issues in your life in trying to control, influence or letting them go?
  - What feelings go along with these words?
  - How do you 'let go' of an issue that you have strong feelings about?
  - What are some different ways of dealing with this issue?
  - What services in your local area are good supports in dealing with this issue?

Handouts for participants:

- Email a photo of the butchers' paper to all the participants (if everyone gives permission)