

Relationships – The seven circles

Many people go in and out of our lives; some stay for a while and some are gone in a blink of an eye. A few people raise hell, and others lift our spirits. Numerous people teach us what we need to learn at the time, while others seem to be of little consequence.

Have you ever wondered who fits where? Have you ever struggled with people's changing attitudes and behaviours? Have you ever hung on to a toxic relationship or friendship for too long? Are your thoughts cluttered with trying to 'work out' where others are at, or why they made 'that' comment in 'that' tone? Have you trusted someone you wish you hadn't? Are you unsure who is 'your tribe'? I may have the solution.

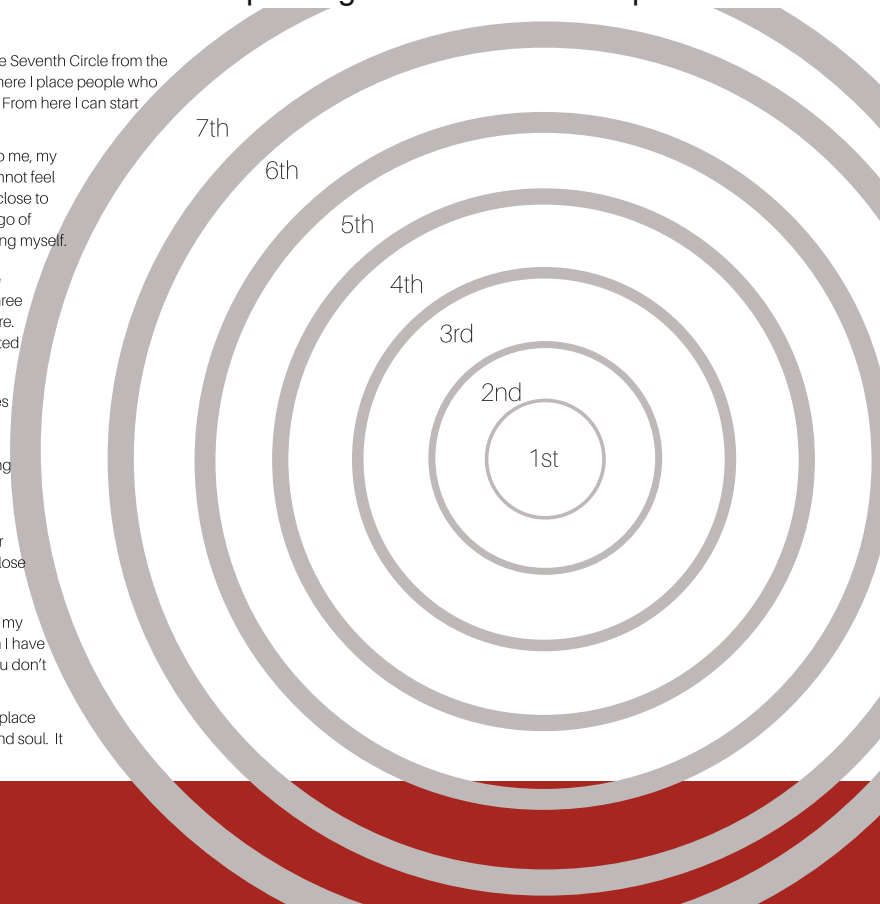
Over two decades ago, a teacher of mine shared with me *The Seven Circles*. At the time, I was struggling in a deteriorating marriage and had some toxic friendships to compliment it. To top it all off, a couple of family members were acting up. This exercise changed my perspective and lifted me out of the draining situations, gave me clarity, and allowed me to make better choices with my time and energy.

Since then I sit down and fill in my circles every year, or when I feel I am beginning to get drawn into others dramas.

Here is a graphic of the seven circles explaining what each circle represents:

THE SEVEN CIRCLES

- 7th - The furthestest out. The distance of the Seventh Circle from the centre gives me rest and release. This is where I place people who have hurt me, angered me or let me down. From here I can start letting go of painful thoughts and feelings.
- 6th - These are people who are important to me, my career or my social life, but try as I may, I cannot feel comfortable with them. I am unable to feel close to them. Circle Six gives me the chance to let go of feelings of inadequacy and to stop explaining myself.
- 5th - Where I put people who are holding me back. They may have moved from Circles Three or Four to here, a safe distance from my centre. The people here are not necessarily connected with the real me.
- 4th - The Moving Lines. My fourth circle gives me time to rest, to find order. This is where I can put people I've just met. I may feel that they are moving to the inner circles or moving out.
- 3rd - People I respect, who may be friends, family or acquaintances. I feel positive in their company. They may be people I am not as close to, but I still enjoy and feel good about them.
- 2nd - I feel happy and strong with people in my second circle. These are people with whom I have shared values. Wonderful friends, even if you don't always understand each other.
- 1st - This is the first circle, the centre. It is the place where I put the people I trust with my heart and soul. It is the beginning of my tribe.



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