Women’s Circles Overview

What are GSB Women’s Circles?

We are growing a community of thriving GSB women who inspire each other, reflect with each other, support and challenge each other and nurture each other. Circles started with the vision of GSB alumnae connecting deeply across generations, industries and life experiences. The mission of Circles is to create an environment to support and learn from each other, as we ask big life questions and experience personal and professional transitions. By fostering authentic relationships between alumnae, GSB Women’s Circles enable members to learn, support, and encourage one another — both personally and professionally.

GSB Women’s Circles Formation

Circles consist of 6-11 women who meet on a monthly basis for 2-3 hours at a time, either at the home or the office space of one of the members. Hosting might take place at the same location throughout the year or be rotated among the members depending on the resources available.

What support is provided by the GSB?

The GSB provides robust support for the program: We create the communication platform and the infrastructure; support Open Houses, All-Circle events; hire external consultants to train the co-leaders, provide the co-leaders and the regional leadership teams with ongoing support; plans and execute strategic expansion of the program to new geographic locations.

What do we do in a Circle?

GSB Women’s Circles offer a great way to dive deeper into topics we all care about — but rarely get to discuss — with women who face similar challenges. A circle is a place to slow down, reflect, let your hair down, get inspired by other women, connect, and support each other.

Discussions at each circle are confidential. Confidentiality builds safety and trust within the circle, allowing authentic relationships to flourish. At the initial meeting of each circle, participants discuss the importance of confidentiality and set ground rules around confidentiality for their own circle.

Circles are not designed as networking groups or business consulting opportunities.

How are GSB Women’s Circles formed?

Membership in each circle is carefully crafted by GSB staff and GSB Women’s Circles leadership to insure diversity across many spectrums — neighboring geography, generations, industries, relationship status, children and more. It is this diversity that creates the value of the relationships which develop within any one circle. It also enriches the support members provide one another. Circles are formed once annually.

Where can I find a GSB Women’s Circle?

Circles will be in six regions (New York, San Francisco, the San Francisco Peninsula, Los Angeles, the San Francisco East Bay and Washington, D.C.) as of Spring 2016. Growth beyond those regions has not yet been determined but the GSB supports geographic expansion.

I noticed there are online groups on the GSB Alumni Association webpage called “GSB Women’s Circles — San Francisco” etc…? May I join those groups?

These online groups are restricted to current members of a circle. Once you are a member of a circle, the GSB will add you as a member of one of the online groups associated with your geographic region. This online group provides a forum whereby current members of GSB Women’s Circles in that particular region can share items of interest via the discussion board, photos from an event via the photo gallery, or create events which allow one to invite, and track RSVPs, for all members of circles in your area.

What if GSB Women’s Circles don’t exist where I live?

The GSB would like to see GSB Women’s Circles expand to many regions around the world. And we want to make sure that the quality of the program is maintained through this expansion. As long as your online alumni directory profile is updated with your current work and home contact information, you will receive an email from the GSB when circles will be forming near you. In the meantime, you can reach out to gsb_women@gsb.stanford.edu with questions and if you are interested in helping lead the launch of Circles in your geographic area, please let us know.

Our Mission

The mission of the GSB Women’s Circles is to create an environment for alumnae to support and learn from each other as we ask big life questions and experience personal and professional transitions. Circles started in 2013 with the vision of GSB alumnae connecting deeply across generations, industries and life experiences. We are growing a community of thriving GSB women who reflect with each other, support and inspire each other to live our fullest possible lives.

Our Values and Commitments

Connect

We are committed to showing up fully and being open to building deep relationships across differences. We look for inclusion of all voices, empathy and mutual respect and we look out for each other’s personal and professional well-being.

Reflect

We courageously tackle big questions about living a meaningful life. We create the space and time to honor what matters most to us and why.

Support

We are committed to support in its many forms: being present for each other’s experiences, being curious and open to different perspectives, and, at times, challenging each other.

Inspire

GSB alumnae are inspiring and interesting women, and we all benefit from the collective wisdom of such women as we embrace risks in pursuit of leading thoughtful lives of impact.

* GSB Women’s Circles membership is limited to alumnae of Stanford GSB’s MBA, PhD, SEP and MSx program.
What is my commitment as a circle member?

By signing up for a circle we ask that you commit for at least a year of participation. This commitment is a must in order to develop deep trust and understanding of one another. We want to emphasize that what you get from a circle is related to what you give to it. The expectation is that by joining, you commit to attending each meeting (excluding emergencies and unavoidable travel) for the upcoming twelve months, and bring your whole self — participate, engage and contribute. Lastly, but most importantly, you’re expected to commit to full confidentiality.

Although I may commit to a year, I do travel regularly and may miss some meetings. Is that a problem?

The circles meet once a month and your commitment is especially important. As a circle develops its own norms, each voice matters. If you know you will be unable to attend at least 10 of the 12 meetings, you might consider waiting another year to join. Of course life happens. However, know going in that attendance is of utmost importance.

I read that participants commit to 1 year. Do the circles typically continue after a year, or are they just designed to meet for 1 year?

Many circles have elected to continue after their 1-year mark. Some members may choose to leave at the end of any one year and new members may join at that time.

How do I register for a circle?

An Open House will be held annually in each geographic location. The Open Houses hold a very important place in the GSB Women’s Circles program. It is at the Open House that we convey the commitment and energy expected of every member of a circle. Attendees also learn what these circles really are and how they operate.

If you feel you understand the level of required commitment, then go ahead and register. Anyone who is registered for the Open House will be sure of receiving a registration link for a circle.

I can't come to an Open House, but am interested in joining a circle. How do I register?

Start by registering for the Open House in your area. This is an important step and a key to you getting the registration link.

I can't come to the Open House, and am not sure about joining a circle at this point. I'm still interested in receiving the communication about the GSB Women’s Circles program. How do I sign up?

If you’re a GSB alumna, you are eligible to join a GSB Women’s Circle. The trick? Make sure your online alumni directory profile is updated with the GSB. When circles are formed every year, the GSB sends out invitations to all alumnae living or working in that geographic region. If that invitation goes to an outdated address or an address you rarely check, you may not receive the invitation in a timely manner.

What are the All-Circle Meetups?

In addition to monthly circle meetings, once per quarter, there are optional All-Circle Meetups to which members of all the local circles are invited. These meetups are designed to enhance the individual circle experience, provide a chance to connect across circles and enable engagement in thought-provoking discussions and activities.

From time to time, All-Circle Meetups will include speakers.

What is a Circle co-leader?

Circle co-leaders (two per circle) will help keep things organized and make sure the circle conversations are constructive and moving forward. Circle leaders will align everyone on the agenda for the next circle meeting, help with logistics, and do any work needed between meetings. They’ll work directly with the GSB Women’s Circles regional leadership team to ensure a smooth and beneficial experience for all.

Monthly professional support as well as annual day-long facilitation training will be offered to those who volunteer to become circle co-leaders. We anticipate a circle co-leader will spend about 1-2 hours a month on GSB Women’s Circles in addition to the time in their actual Circle meeting.

How do I become a Circle co-leader?

Circle co-leaders are offered training by experienced facilitators and trainers (all are Touchy Feely and WIM Group facilitators). If you're interested in volunteering to become a circle co-leader, please check the box when you fill out the registration form, and we will be in touch. Also, you can email us at gsb_women@gsb.stanford.edu

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gsb.stanford.edu/events/women