Women’s Circles Overview

What are GSB Women’s Circles?

Women’s Circles are small groups of GSB alumnae who gather monthly in the interest of connecting, reflecting, supporting, and inspiring one another to live our best lives.

The Women’s Circles program was started in 2013 by two alumnae with the vision of GSB alumnae connecting deeply across generations, industries and life experiences. They wanted to ensure that alumnae are supported to thrive as they face unique challenges in the arc of their lives post-GSB. Circles create an environment to support and learn from each other, as we ask big life questions and experience personal and professional transitions.

GSB Women’s Circles Organization

A Circle consists of 6-10 alumnae 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:

- Creates the communication platform and the community infrastructure.
- Provides logistic support for Annual Community Kickoffs and All-Circle events.
- Hires Circles Master Facilitators, who train Circle Co-Leaders and Regional Board Members and provide ongoing support through content and skill development.
- Supports the Global Management Board on the 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, take a step back from the day-to-day, let your hair down, and engage with other GSB women on topics big and small.

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 opportunities.

How are GSB Women’s Circles formed?

Circles are formed once annually. Membership in each Circle is carefully crafted by the Regional Leadership Board to ensure diversity across many spectrums — generation, work status, industry, relationship status, children and more. This diversity enhances the value of the relationships which develop within a Circle. Diversity also enriches the support members provide one another.

Where can I find a GSB Women’s Circle?

Circles are in ten geographic regions (New York, San Francisco, the San Francisco Peninsula, Los Angeles, the San Francisco East Bay, Washington, DC, Boston, Houston, Seattle, and London) as of Fall 2018. The GSB supports expanded access to the program, including a Virtual Circles pilot, which is underway.

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 from all members of Circles in your area.

Our Mission

The mission of the GSB Women’s Circles is to grow a community of thriving GSB alumnae. Circles create an environment for alumnae to connect deeply across generations, reflect on big life questions, support each other through life’s ups and downs and inspire each other to live our fullest possible lives.

Our Values

Connect

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

Reflect

We courageously tackle big questions about living meaningful lives. We create space and time to honor what matters most to us and reflect on why.

Support

We are committed to support in many forms – giving full attention to each other’s concerns, being curious and open to different perspectives, and at times, challenging each other.

Inspire

GSB alumnae are inspiring and interesting women. We all benefit from our collective wisdom as we embrace risks in pursuing thoughtful lives of impact.

*All alumni who are interested in the promotion of women, transgender, and gender non-binary individuals are invited to participate.
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What if GSB Women’s Circles don’t exist where I live?
The GSB would like to ensure access to Women’s Circles for alumnae around the world. We also 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. If you are interested in helping lead the launch of Circles in your geographic area, please let us know.

What is my commitment as a Circle member?
When signing up for a Circle we ask that you commit for at least one year of participation. This commitment is critical to developing deep trust and understanding of one another in the Circle. What you get from a Circle is related to what you give to it. By joining, you commit to attending each meeting (with the exceptions of emergencies and unavoidable travel) for the upcoming twelve months, and to bringing your whole self to 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 more than two 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 one year. Do the Circles typically continue after a year, or are they just designed to meet for one year?
Many Circles have elected to continue after their one-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 Annual Community Kickoff will be held in each geographic location. The Community Kickoffs are an important part of the GSB Women’s Circles program. At the Community Kickoff, you have a chance to meet members of the existing Circles community and we convey the commitment and engagement expected of every member of a Circle. Attendees also develop a deeper understanding of the Circle experience and how they operate through a Circle-like experience.

I can’t come to a Community Kickoff, but am interested in joining a Circle. How do I register?
If you are unable to attend the Community Kickoff, please reach out to gsb_women@gsb.stanford.edu or a Director of the Regional Leadership Board before the event date to discuss your interest in participating in a Circle and understand more about the program and commitments.

I can’t come to the Community Kickoff, 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?
Ensure your GSB alumni directory contact information is up to date! In advance of each Annual Community Kickoff, 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, there are periodic 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 engage across the broader community in thought-provoking discussions and activities. From time to time, All-Circle Meetups will include speakers on topics important to Circle members.

What is a Circle Co-Leader?
Circle Co-Leaders (two per Circle) work closely with the GSB Women’s Circles Regional Leadership Board and Circles Master Facilitators to ensure a smooth and beneficial experience for all Circle members. They help keep things organized and make sure the Circle conversations are constructive and inclusive during the monthly meetings. Co-Leaders align Circle members on the agenda for the next meeting, help with logistics, and do any follow-up needed between meetings. A Circle Co-Leader will spend about 1-2 hours a month on GSB Women’s Circles in addition to the time in her actual Circle meeting.

Co-Leaders are invited to the optional Global Leadership Summit held at the GSB.

How do I become a Circle Co-Leader?
Circle Co-Leaders are offered training by the Circles Master Facilitators, who are experienced facilitators and trainers. 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

gsb.stanford.edu/events/women