



DRUM CIRCLE

Jasmin Müller

www.beat-complete.de

What is a Drum Circle?

Basically, this is a group of people, arranged in a circle, practicing “free drumming”. The circular arrangement of the seats allows an integrative and inspiring atmosphere.

In the 80s a new concept of a “facilitated” Drum Circle was brought up by Arthur Hull, USA. Facilitating here means to help the group of drummers to really play together, to develop a common team rhythm (*Groove*).



What is the idea behind?

A Drum Circle is not a usual workshop where you would be taught how to improve your drumming techniques.

Facilitator uses different techniques like “rhythm games” to connect the drummers, while also encouraging free drumming.

The main focus is set on encouraging the group to *listen to each other*, to *communicate* via the drums and to “let go”.



Is drumming suitable for everybody?

There is no other instrument, which would allow people with different background and skills to sit together and start to play, regardless the size of group – this is impossible with guitars or trumpets.

The drum is probably the oldest instrument we know.

People have always been fascinated by the beat of a drum.

Drums were (and are) used for

- communication and expression
- celebrations and rituals
- community or “team building”



What is so special about a Drum Circle?

There is no audience, only active drummers.

Everybody can easily join, regardless of age, culture or social background.

Also people who speak a different language or who are illiterate can play together, as there is no „script“, no drumming notes, no written instruction to follow.

It is ideal for absolute beginners as they have the chance to try out all kinds of percussion instruments, while the facilitator assists where needed.



Combining different percussion instruments can result in surprising sound patterns.

Challenges

Absolute beginners are often standing “outside”

→ *integration and reassurance is a key task for the facilitator*

Group should be allowed to “crash”, if this is meant to happen

→ *facilitator helps the group to get back on track*

Due to the “noise” level, verbal instructions are hardly possible

→ *facilitator has to work with signs, gestures and facial expressions*

The “signs” of the facilitator may be too complex / vague, so group cannot understand, is confused, unsettled, frustrated

→ *facilitator to apply KISS principle*



The equipment

Some facilitators use a shorthand notation to document their actions



Shorthand Notation ACTIONS

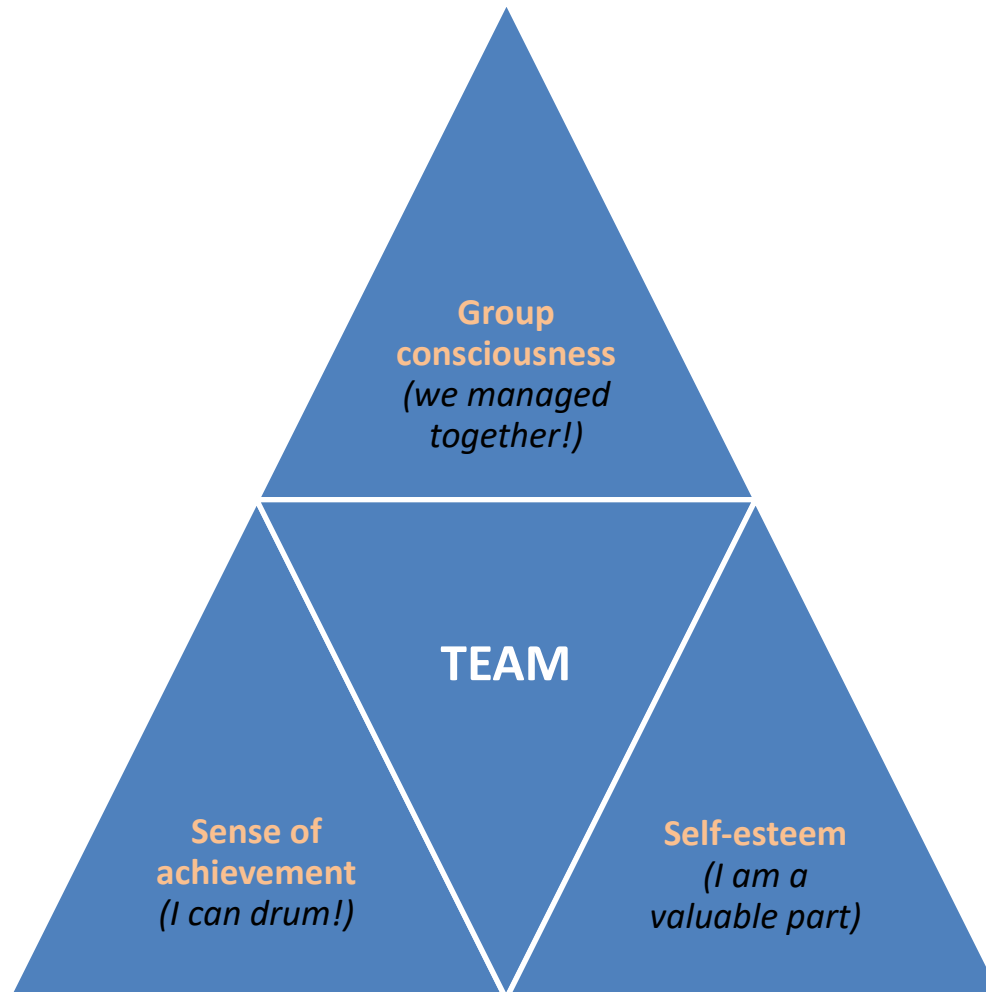
+	Start of Sequence	👂	Listening
↻	Call to Groove	///	Layering In
→	Group in Groove	\\	Layering Out
G	Continue to Play	✓	Accent Downbeats
!	Attention Call	↗	Volume Up
⊗	Stop Cut	↘	Volume Down
~	Rumble	↑	Speed Up Tempo
↔	Call and Response	↓	Slow Down Tempo
⊘	Sculpt	☆	Showcase
⊖	1/2 Circle Sculpt	△	Pass Out Part
⊙	1/4 Circle Sculpt	↗↖	Teeter Totter
⊚	1/3 Circle Sculpt	↔	Switchback
👏	Clap	~	Modulation
		~	Wave

Not Copyrighted. This is a Drum Circle Facilitators' Community Work in Progress

The effect of drumming together

Drumming may reduce stress; it may also have a relaxing and inspiring effect at the same time. Everybody's contribution is appreciated.

The jointly developed rhythm strengthens the team coherence and spirit.



Application areas

Drum Circles may be arranged for the purpose of

- **Education**
(train blind or hearing-impaired people on perception of sound waves, train pupils with ADHD to focus)
- **Team-building**
(alternative event during trainings or congresses – to improve team work efficiencies, to train team on non-verbal communication)
- **Well-being** and in line with a **therapy**
(for general stress reduction, patients with depression or burnout syndrome, to cheer up children in hospital)
- **Inclusion** or **integration**
(for disabled or elderly people, refugees)
- **Entertainment**
(on a private party or public event)



Drumming with colleagues?

I play the drums and other instruments for many years now.

Drumming is a perfect balance to my job which is often stressful.

I am a certified Drum Circle Facilitator and have conducted my first Drum Circle in the office of the company I worked for in May 2010.

About 20 colleagues rushed into the room after they finished their work for the day.

All of them forgot about their job after a few minutes of drumming.

When finished everyone left with a smile.

None of them had drummed before.



Thank you!

