



A Tool for Confronting Change, A Driver for Making Connections

The U.S. Department of Defense is a large, sprawling pillar of the federal government with many sub-departments under its massive banner. But even the world's largest defense agency needs effective ways to enhance the personal and professional lives of its employees. Three years ago, Heather Pape successfully worked inside Defense in Washington, D.C., using the Peer Coaching Circles created by Carter and Teri McNamara at Authenticity Consulting.

With a Masters in Adult Learning in leadership and coaching, Pape embraced the Peer Coaching Circles as “another tool in my toolbox to help change the dynamics of the groups and individuals” she was working with as part of duties. She says the circles are not only practical and effective but are easily teachable and transferable to other settings and individuals: “Almost anyone can become a peer coach and teach this practice to others.”

“The circles provide a time and place for participants to learn from each other, that’s one of key benefits of using them,” she also notes. “They are also very effective at instilling self-sufficiency. They definitely can change group or individual dynamics!”

She also sees the Peer Coaching Circles – and now the free [Peer Support Circles](#) resource – as a powerful mechanism to help people confront change, especially in the charged atmosphere that most of us are experiencing in 2020. “I think this very generous peer-driven gift to any organization or community in search of a method to deal with change. The circles can help people expand themselves through professional and personal development – even as we move through this difficult period.”

Although Pape is more than familiar with the myriad of professional development programs available to the U.S. government personnel and others in the corporate and non-profit worlds, she says there are some key differentiators that set Peer Support Circles apart from the rest: “Within the circles, a level of confidentiality exists among participants that drives tight personal and professional bounds. These are the cohesive connections that many programs strive for, but don’t always realize.”

The leadership development professional also knows how all departments at the federal level value accountability and positive results. The circles provide both. “People feel free enough in their peer circles to ask the kinds of questions that can help remove obstacles to goals they are trying to achieve,” she continues. “That helps them deal with change and make improvements. It fosters a high level of accountability that other coaching techniques don’t achieve.”

As to whether people and institutions will respond to the free Peer Support Circles offering, she remains optimistic: “I think just getting the word out more is going to have a positive impact for anyone or any organization looking for a tool right now that builds trust while connecting and supporting others.”