

Worksheet 4

The Circle of Friendship

For some people, relationships with family and friends are what keep our lives on track. We have a whole range of relationships—family, partners, lifelong friends, work colleagues, neighbours, people with whom we share an interest, right through to people whom we pay to provide services.

For people with disabilities, these relationships are equally important but can sometimes be challenging to create.

We needn't leave friendships and relationships to chance. We can be really intentional and make it easier for people with disabilities to strengthen their community. We can do this by enabling people go to places where they can engage in existing or new interests, hobbies and passions, and could meet people who share these interests.

Use the relationship circles tool on the following pages to look at the people your family member already has in their life. It will help to map out their community as well. It can be completed one-to-one, or with family and friends, or even brought to a Circle meeting to complete as a group.

In the relationship mapping diagram, the concentric circles are used to plot out relationships. Authors, John O'Brien and Jack Pearpoint (2015) describes these circles as:

- The circle of **intimacy**
- The circle of **friendship**
- The circle of **participation**
- The circle of **exchange**

CIRCLE 1 The circle of intimacy is concerned with loving relationships and the anchors in your family member's life. In here, go the people your family member cannot imagine life without- typically, immediate family and chosen family. Your family member doesn't need to get along with them all the time!

CIRCLE 2 The circle of friendship is concerned with the friends and allies of your family member. Good questions to ask your family member are: Who do you call when you've got good news? Who do you vent with when you've had an argument with someone? Who do you draw strength from, share a laugh with, and share your dreams with?

CIRCLE 3 The circle of participation is concerned with shared interests and community connection. In here are people your relative knows from clubs, committees, work, and so on. NOTE This circle is particularly important because it is the building block for circles 2 and 1. The more connections made in this circle will increase the likelihood of building meaningful connections in circles 2 and 1.

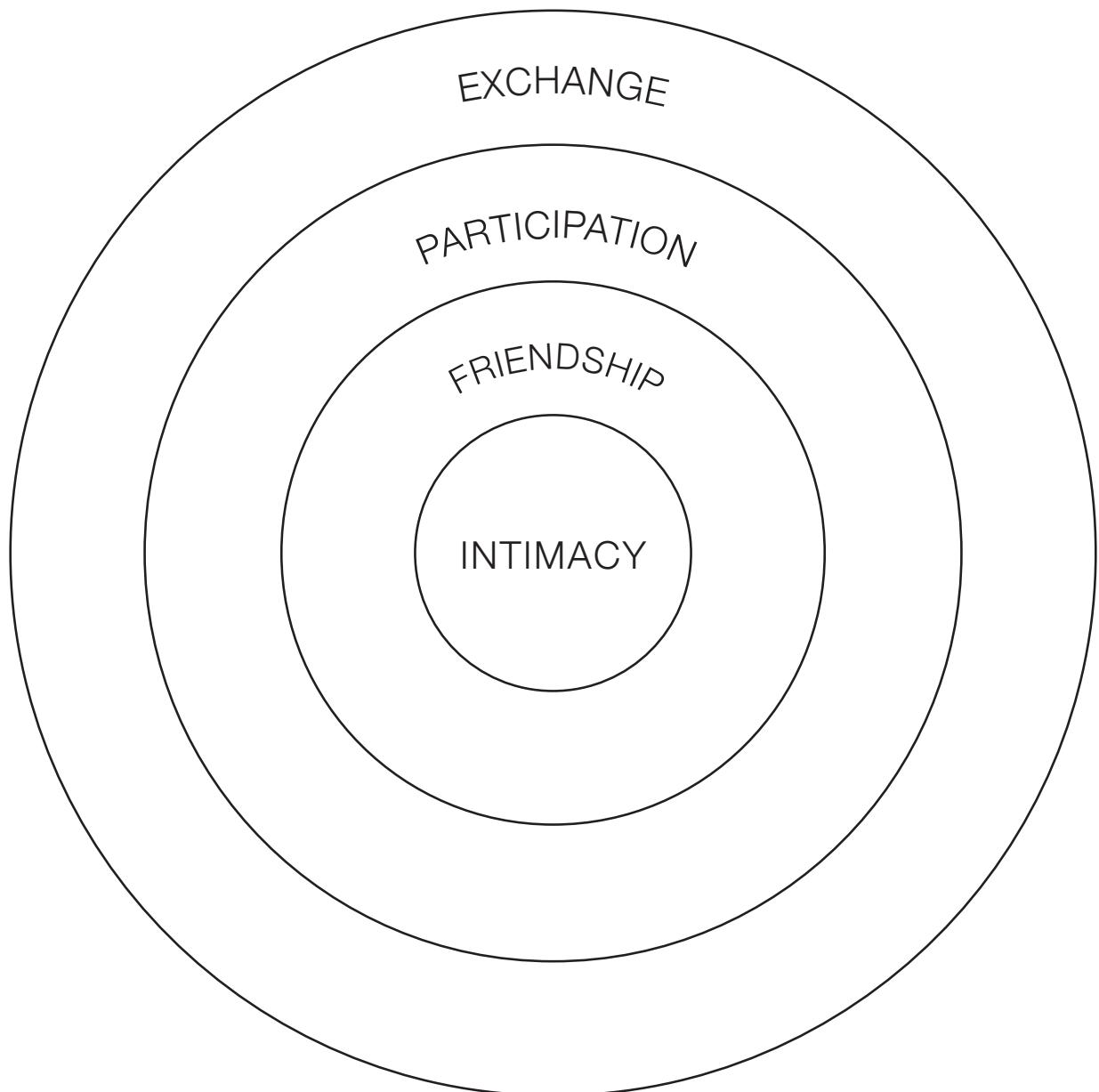
CIRCLE 4 The circle of economic exchange is concerned with paid relationships. In this circle are people like your family member's health care practitioner, dentist, and so on. What will emerge when your family member's diagram is complete is a picture of how their network is or isn't in balance. For example:

- Many people with disabilities have the same number as other citizens in Circle 1, but few in Circles 2 and 3 and markedly more in Circle 4
- Some people with disabilities spend most of their lives with people who are paid to spend time with them, that is, those in the outer circle

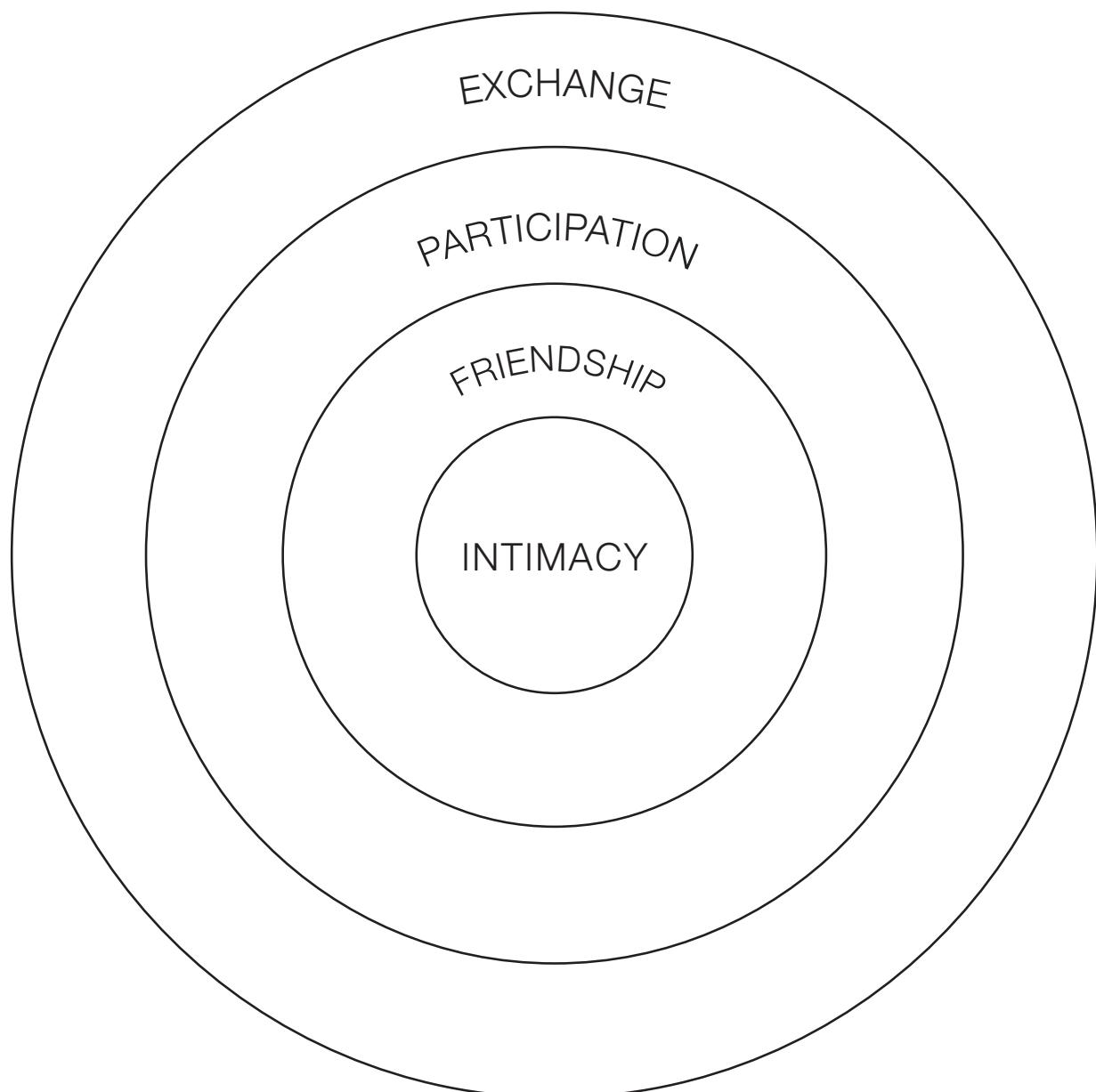
The main strategy for strengthening the inner circles is to bring people into Circle 3, the circle of participation. These are people who spend time sharing an activity of mutual interest—anything from working together, playing a sport, sharing an art or craft activity, to going out for a meal together or going to the theatre. To take this a step further, also consider how we ensure that participation in the things that matter to us happens with predictability and purpose. Through participation in consistent ways, people become friends over time. We also know that people don't come straight into Circle 2, the circle of friendship. Friendship doesn't happen instantly.

Explore planningnetwork.ca for additional resources on Nurturing Friendship.

Sample relationship circle



Your family member's circle



O'Brien, J. & Pearpoint, J. (2015)
