

## **Horseshoes or Circles**

Have you ever felt like you don't fit in? I sure have and that insecurity still creeps up on me when I least expect it.

I follow a great podcast called "The Squad Life" which is hosted by a young entrepreneur who is full of energy, enthusiasm, focus, and drive! She hosts a diverse group of guests and addresses some very direct topics. Last week, she shared a quote by Glennon Doyle that really hit me!

It says "Horseshoes are better than circles. Leave space. Always leave space. Horseshoes of friends are greater than circles of friends. Life can be lonely. Stand in horseshoes."

One of the elements of 4-H is belonging and it is a crucial part of positive youth development! It can happen in the club setting or a project meeting or at a regional activity but finding a group of people who get you just as you are and want the very best for you is an incredible experience. In addition, we teach 4-H members about looking for ways to include others as part of Leadership and Citizenship skills. Having somewhere to practice skills (and look a little silly sometimes) and having someone who supports you becoming your best YOU are such an important part of positive youth development.

On the other side, have you been on the outside of a group that all knows one another, shares experiences and inside jokes? That can be a tough circle to step into. We huddle in sports because we don't want the other team to know our plan but do we huddle in life? I see it happen often and it doesn't feel welcoming.

I love the metaphor of a horseshoe instead! Leave an open space and welcome someone new into your group. Will it change your group dynamic? Possibly and just maybe for the better! Opening our minds and our group to someone new can challenge our way of thinking and our experiences. It prepares young people for civil discourse and to take the next steps they need to be successful in the world. This doesn't mean that you leave your values or identity behind; maturity is acknowledging that others are different from you and sometimes we "agree to disagree" and can still be friends.

Be conscious in social or school/work settings of opening the circle into a horseshoe and inviting someone new to be a part of the group. Watch for the horseshoes around you and take that brave leap to meet new friends or deepen friendships.

I have a great circle of friends.....wait, make that a horseshoe! Remember “Life can be lonely; Stand in Horseshoes!”

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