



## **New Bubbles = New Conversations**

**An Article by: Gail M. McDonald and Marilyn L. Bushey**

“We all have our bubbles,” said our friend Carrie. She went on to explain that she heard Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, use this term to describe the people who are physically inside our inner circles.

As the COVID-19 restrictions continue to lift, we will all need to think carefully about who we invite into our bubbles, particularly when we are considering our physical space. This relates to both our personal and work lives, although your workplace will hopefully have guidelines that are acceptable to you.

Evaluating who you want to invite into your bubble may seem like a simple task, yet it really isn't. You have new choices to make and new, often uncomfortable, conversations to have. Who do you invite to your home? Whose homes do you go to? Will you be comfortable with the social distancing in your workplace? What events, if any, will you attend?

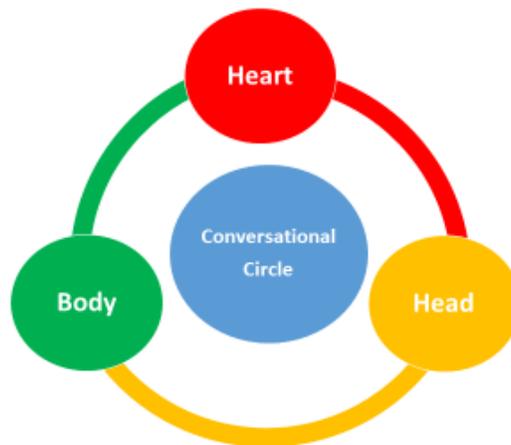
During the most stringent restrictions, most of us over the age of 50 kept our bubbles small – typically including only those who lived with us and possibly a few others.

As restrictions lift, you are probably enlarging your bubble. For each new addition to your bubble, you are, in essence, merging two bubbles. You will have questions, such as: “Who is in that person's bubble now?” “What decisions are they likely to make about their future bubbles?” “How are they handling social distancing?” In other words, “Am I safe with them?”

To answer these questions, you will want to have conversations that may be uncomfortable. You may feel like you are snooping into other people's private lives and probing about things that aren't your business. It gets even tougher when you are dealing with work colleagues, customers, or possible employers. Yet, with COVID-19 looming in our lives, these things are your business.

So how do you have these uncomfortable conversations with grace, compassion, and true care for yourself as well as the other person?

We offer “The Conversation Circle,” a simple 4-step process based on the fundamental concept that successful conversations begin and end with care.



1. **Start with your heart.** Place your attention on the people you would like to be part of your bubble. Why do you care about them? How do you feel when you are in their presence? What do they need and how could you help them?
2. **Engage your head.** Plan each conversation you will have. How important is it that you share physical space with this person? What is the ideal outcome of this conversation? What information will you offer about yourself? What questions will you ask? What is your contingency plan if the conversation doesn't go well?
3. **Listen to your body.** Your body tells you the truth. What is your intuition telling you? What sensations are you feeling in your body? Are you triggered in any way?
4. **Return to your heart.** Stay connected to the other person and accept whatever happens. If need be, allow the conversation to end without closure. Allow yourself to feel gratitude for the other person and for yourself.

Hopefully “The Conversation Circle” allows you to charter a more informed path as you re-enter into your bubbles. If you enjoyed this conversation exploration into our new normal, then please feel free to follow us on Facebook or LinkedIn.



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