

RULES TO BE OBSERVED

FOR

THE SPIRIT CIRCLE.

Suggested in part by EXPERIENCE and OBSERVATION, but still more immediately framed under the DIRECTION and IMPRESSION of SPIRITS.

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The Spirit Circle is the assembling together of a given number of persons for the purpose of seeking communion with the spirits who have passed away from earth into the higher world of souls. The chief advantage of such an assembly is the mutual impartation and reception of the combined magnetisms of the assemblage. These in combination form a force stronger than that of an isolated subject—first, enabling spirits to commune with greater power; next, developing the latent gifts of mediumship in such members of the circle as are thus endowed; and finally promoting that harmonious and social spirit of fraternal intercourse, which is one of the especial aims of the spirit's mission.

The first conditions to be observed relate to the persons who compose the circle. These should be, as far as possible, of opposite temperaments, as positive and negative in disposition, whether male or female; also of moral characters, pure minds, and not marked by repulsive points of either physical or mental condition. The physical temperaments should contrast with each other; but no person, suffering from decidedly chronic disease, or of very debilitated physique, should be present at any circle, unless it is formed expressly for healing purposes. I would recommend the number of the circle never to be less than three, or more than twelve. An even number is generally better than an odd, and the best number is eight. When there are any persons of a mild character, and negative, undecided temperaments present, the number should be uneven.

The use growing out of the association of differing temperaments is to form a battery on the principle of electricity or gal-

vanism, composed of positive and negative elements, the sum of which should be unequal. No person of a very strongly positive temperament or disposition should be present, as any such magnetic spheres emanating from the circle will overpower that of the spirits, who must always be positive to the circle in order to produce phenomena. It is not desirable to have more than two already well-developed mediums in a circle, mediums always absorbing the magnetism of the rest of the party. Hence, when there are too many present, the force being divided, cannot operate successfully with any.

OF TEMPERATURE.

Never let the apartment be overheated, or even close; as an unusual amount of magnetism is liberated at a circle, the room is always warmer than ordinary, and should be well ventilated. *Avoid strong light*, which, by producing excessive motion in the atmosphere, disturbs the manifestations. A very subdued light is the most favourable for any manifestations of a magnetic character, especially for spiritual magnetism.

OF THE POSITIONS TO BE OBSERVED.

If the circle is one which meets together periodically, and is composed of the same persons, let them always occupy the same seats (unless changed under spiritual direction), and sit (as the most favourable of all positions) round a table, their hands laid on it, with palms downwards. It is believed that the wood, when charged, becomes a conductor, without the necessity of holding or touching hands. I should always suggest the propriety of employing a table as a conductor, especially as all tables in household use are more or less magnetically charged already. If flowers or fruit are in the room, see that they are just freshly gathered, otherwise remove them; also, avoid sitting in a room with many minerals, metals, or glasses. These all injuriously affect sensitives, of whom mediums are the type.

I recommend the séance to be opened either with prayer or a song sung in chorus, after which subdued, quiet, and harmonising conversation is better than wearisome silence; but let the conversation be always directed towards the purpose of the gathering, and never sink into discussion or rise to emphasis; let it be gentle, quiet, and spiritual, until phenomena begin to be manifest. Always have a slate, or pen, pencil, and paper on the table, so as not to be obliged to rise to procure them. Especially avoid all entering or quitting the room, moving about, irrelevant conversation, or disturbances within or without the circle room after the séance has once commenced.

The spirits are far more punctual to seasons, faithful to promises, and periodical in action, than mortals. Endeavour, then,

to fix your circle at a convenient hour, when you will be least interrupted, and do not fail in your appointments. Do not admit unpunctual, late comers, nor, if possible, suffer the air of the room to be disturbed in *any way* after the sitting commences. Nothing but necessity, indisposition, or *impressions* (to be hereafter described) should warrant the least disturbance of the sitting, WHICH SHOULD NEVER exceed *two hours*, unless an extension of time be solicited of the spirits. Let the séance always extend to one hour, even if no results are obtained: it sometimes requires all that time for spirits to form their battery of the materials furnished. Let it be also remembered that all circles are experimental, hence no one should be discouraged if phenomena are not produced at the first few sittings. Stay with the same circle for six sittings; if no phenomena are then produced (provided all the above conditions are observed), you may be sure you are not rightly assimilated to each other; you do not form the requisite combinations, or neutralise each other;—in that case, break up, and let that circle of members meet with other persons—that is, change one, two or three persons of your circle for others, and so on, until you succeed.

A well-developed test-medium may sit without injury for any person, or any description of character or temperament; but a circle sitting for mutual development, should never admit persons addicted to bad habits, criminals, sensualists, strongly positive persons of any kind, whether rude, sceptical, violent tempered, or dogmatical. An humble, candid, inquiring spirit, unprejudiced and receptive of truth, is the only proper frame of mind in which to sit for phenomena, the delicate magnetism of which is shaped, tempered, made or marred as much by *mental* as physical conditions. When once any of the circle can communicate freely and conclusively with spirits, they can and will take charge of and regulate the future movements of the circle.

OF IMPRESSIONS.

Impressions are the voices of spirits speaking to spirits, or else the monitions of the spirit within us, and should always be respected and followed out, unless (which is very rare) suggestive of actual wrong in act or word. At the opening of the circle, one or more of the members are often impressed to change seats with others. One or more are impressed with the desire to withdraw, or a strong feeling of repulsion to some member of the circle, makes it painful to remain there. Let any or all of these impressions be faithfully regarded, and, at commencing, pledge to each other the promise that no offence shall be taken by following out impressions.

If a strong impression to write, speak, sing, dance, or gesticu-

late, possess any mind present, follow it out faithfully. It has a meaning, if you cannot at first realise it. Never feel hurt in your own person, nor ridicule your neighbour for any failures to express, or at first discover the meaning of the spirit impressing you.

Spirit control is often deficient, and at first almost always imperfect. By often yielding to it, your organism becomes more flexible, and the spirit more experienced; and practice in control is absolutely necessary for spirits as well as mortals. If dark and evil disposed spirits manifest to you, *never drive them away*, but always strive to elevate them and treat them as you would mortals under similar circumstances. Do not always attribute falsehoods to "lying spirits," or deceiving mediums. Many mistakes occur in the communion of which you cannot always be aware.

Strive for truth, but rebuke error gently, and do not always attribute it to design, but rather to mistake, in so difficult and experimental a stage of the communion as mortals at present enjoy with spirits.

Unless strictly charged by spirits to do otherwise, do not continue to hold sittings with the same parties for more than a twelve-month. After that time, if not before, fresh elements of magnetism are absolutely essential. Some of the original circle should withdraw, and others take their places.

A MODEL CIRCLE.

It consists of six friends, half of whom are male, half female, and one person (male or female indifferent) who is an already developed medium.

One of the gentlemen present has some magnetic power, and rather a positive will. A second is good, gentle, and kind—stout in person and very healthful, but not remarkable for intellect. The third is small, acute, observing—enthusiastic and disposed to literature.

One of the ladies is very quiet, gentle, and passive, of fair complexion, and matronly healthful organism. The second, shrewd, active, inquisitive, and dark haired. The third a writer or musician, and very sensitive, not strong in frame, yet not sickly. These persons are friends, and always in harmonious relation with each other. They each love Spiritualism, and are candid seekers for truth. They have special opinions, but except the two gentlemen, No. 1 and 3, and the lady No. 3, have no very marked and positive characters.

These last three feel that "*they do not know everything*," and, desirous to learn, they seek the spirit circle for instruction, the others chiefly from love of Spiritualism. They meet once a-week, at eight in the evening—lock the door, and neither admit others

nor answer knocks. They always retain the same places at the same table, close their sittings at ten exactly, and commence and open the meeting with a sweet hymn, or spiritual song. They converse pleasantly, asking for their spirit-friends when they meet—never seek for anything special to themselves, except they first state their wishes to all the circle, and obtain their consent—knowing that a strong, though unexpressed wish or feeling on the part of one member of the circle, will become a sharp positive angle of magnetism, which will obstruct and perhaps neutralise the rest of the phenomena.

They never, if possible, absent themselves from the circle, regarding it as a high and sacred privilege to commune with spirit friends. They never introduce strangers at the circle, unless the spirits desire it, or leave is first asked and obtained of the circle and the spirits.

ANOTHER MODEL CIRCLE.

A family, consisting of a father, mother, and four or five children. The same rules are observed as above—but the impressions of each must be studiously watched and followed out, as all children are more or less likely to become mediums.

Should any one of the children or young people express the least dislike to sitting, respect their feelings, as a wise monition from their spirit friends.

Another circle may be composed of five or seven males, of whom three at least should be of fair complexion, mild or sensitive dispositions, and young in years.

A party of five or seven ladies may also sit successfully for manifestations; or two ladies and one gentleman, each party observing as much of the above rules as possible.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS REITERATED.

Admit no ill-disposed, mischievous, ill-tempered, dogmatic, or very sickly persons to developing circles.

Seek harmonious, friendly, and spiritual natures; candid minds, reverend or truth-seeking spirits, and pure, healthful, or at least moderately healthy organisms.

Endeavour to observe the rules laid down concerning temperature, and freedom from disturbance; within or without the circle room.

Never give up in discouragement with one party, under six experimental sittings; and after evidences of medium power are exhibited, even as slight as shaking of the hands, quivering of the nerves, silent entrancement, or erratic movements, continue to sit for development for at least twelve sances.

Study and follow out your impressions, and especially when they urge you to withdraw from circles.

Respect the circle, and faithfully keep appointments made with spirits or each other.

Never seek the spirit circle in a trivial or deceptive spirit—then and then only have you cause to *fear it*.

Never permit any one to sit in circles who suffers from it in health or mind, especially those who are exercised with violence, or who become unmanageable. If such phenomena continue after three trials, assure yourself magnetism in the case of such persons is an intoxicating drug, which operates perniciously on their constitutions, and it should be carefully avoided.

Every seventh person in the world can be a medium of some kind, and become developed for external and obvious manifestations through the due and judicious operations of the spirit circle. When once mediums are fully developed, the circle sometimes becomes injurious to them. When they once feel this, by impression or spirit direction, to be the case, let none be offended if they withdraw from circles, and only use their gifts under spirit direction, in other times and places.

All persons are subject to spirit influence and spiritual guidance and control; but only one in seven can so externalise this power as to use it consciously, or as what is significantly called a "*medium*." And, finally, let it ever be remembered that, except in the case of "*trance speakers*," no medium can ever hope successfully to exercise their gift in a large or promiscuous assembly; while *trance speakers*, no less than mediums for any other gift, can never be influenced by spirits far beyond *their own normal capacity* in the MATTER of the intelligence rendered—the magnetism of the spirit and the spirit circle being but a quickening fire, which inspires the brain, stimulates the faculties, and, like a hot-house process on plants, forces into abnormal prominence dormant or latent powers of mind, but *creates nothing*. Even in the case of merely automatic speakers, writers, rapping, tipping, and other forms of test mediums, the intelligence or idea of the spirit is always measurably shaped by the capacity and idiosyncrasies of the medium. All spirit power is thus limited in expression by the organism through which it works, and spirits may control, inspire, and influence the human mind, but do not change or re-create it.

EMMA HARDINGE, *Medium*.

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