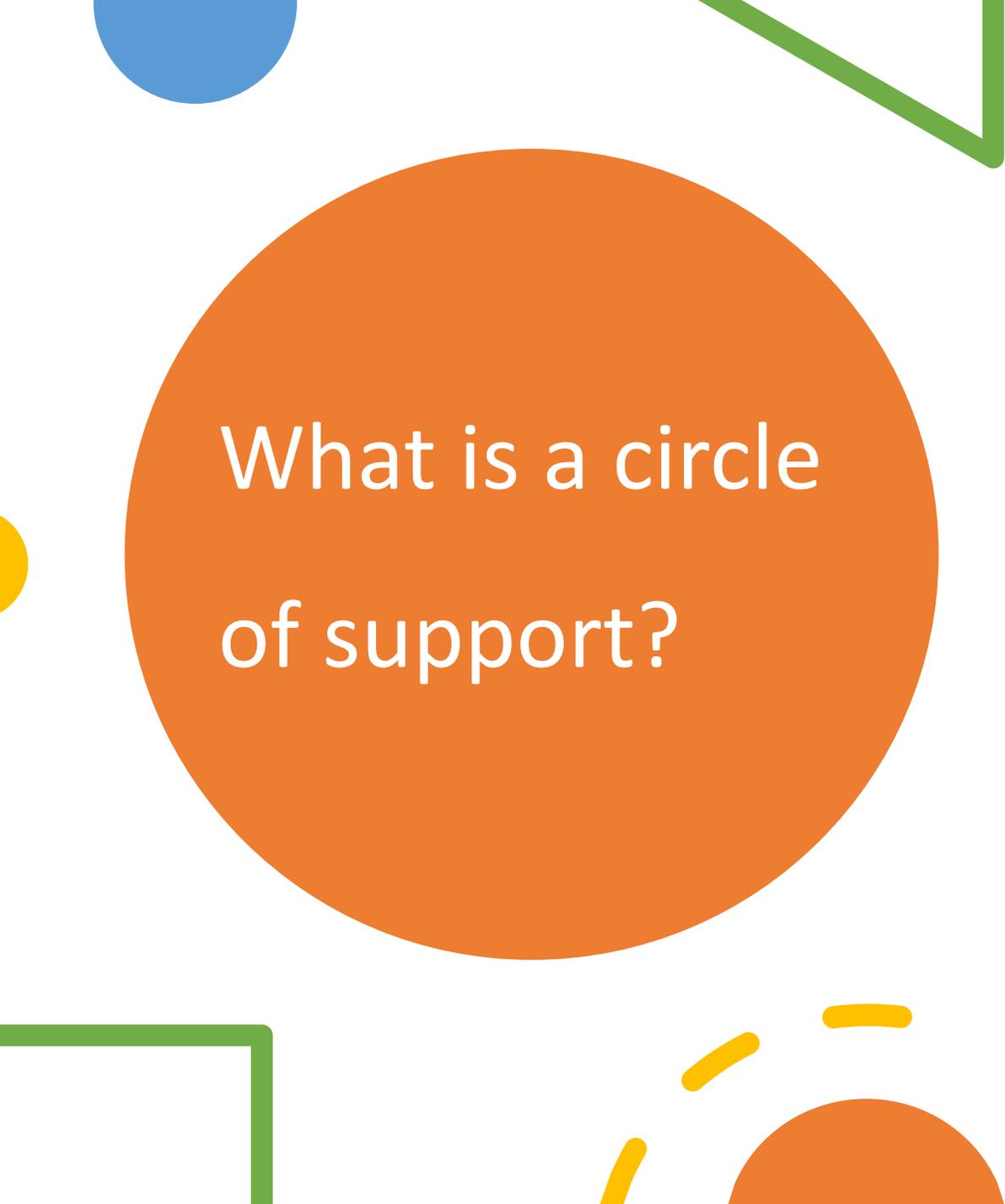




Your Circle and You: Getting the Most from Your Circle of Support

Mike Rogers, Western Regional Organizer
Arnold Ackerley, Administrative Director



What is a circle of support?

- A group of people who you have chosen to help you plan for and live the life you want.
- Members of your circle may help you with different things you need.
- A Circle of Support is important to be successful in Self-Direction, but other people can form circles as well.

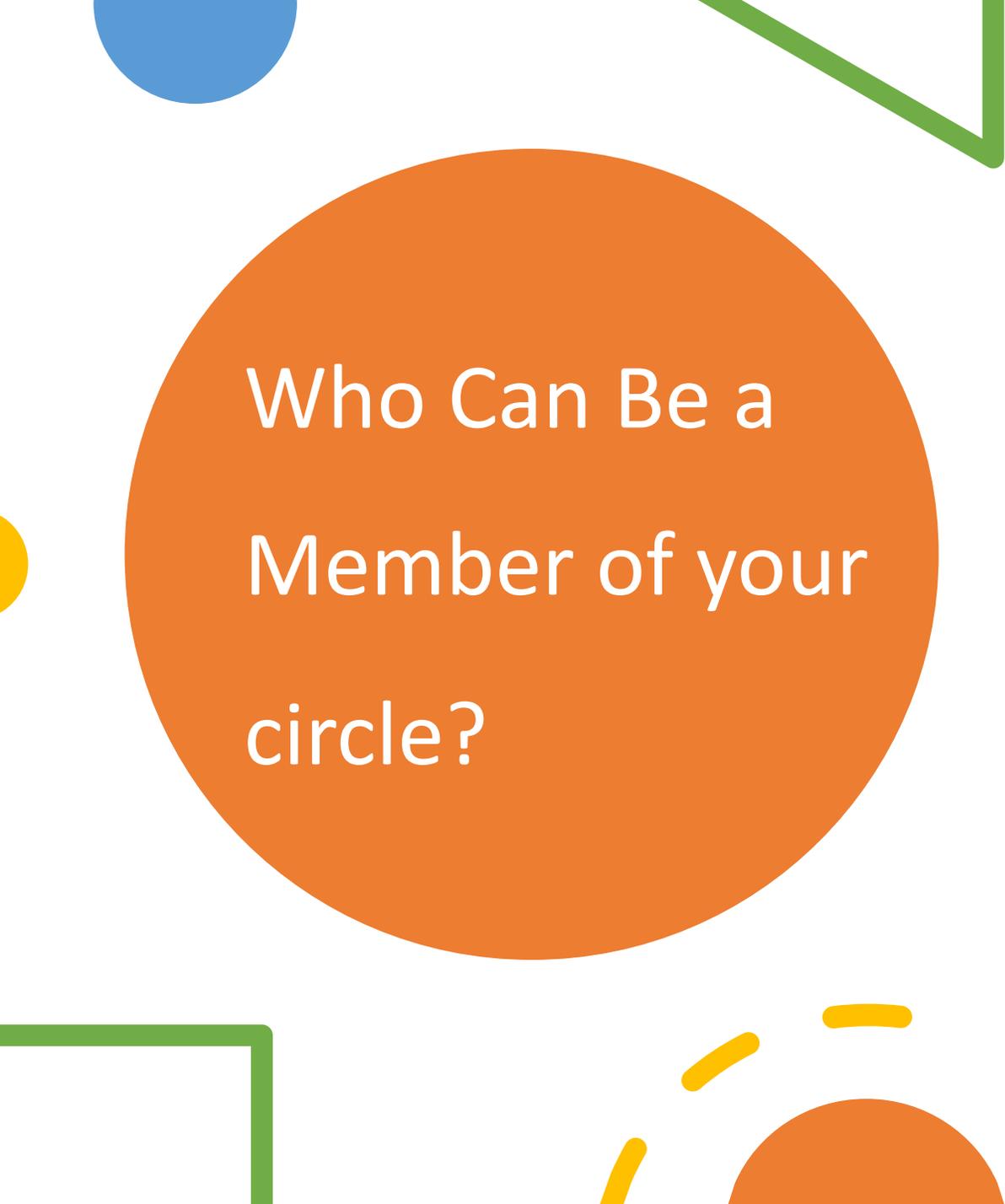


A Circle of Support is NOT...

It is not a group of people assigned by someone other than you.

It is not a group of people who make decisions for you.

It is not every person who offers you help.



Who Can Be a Member of your circle?

Anyone you choose can be a circle member.

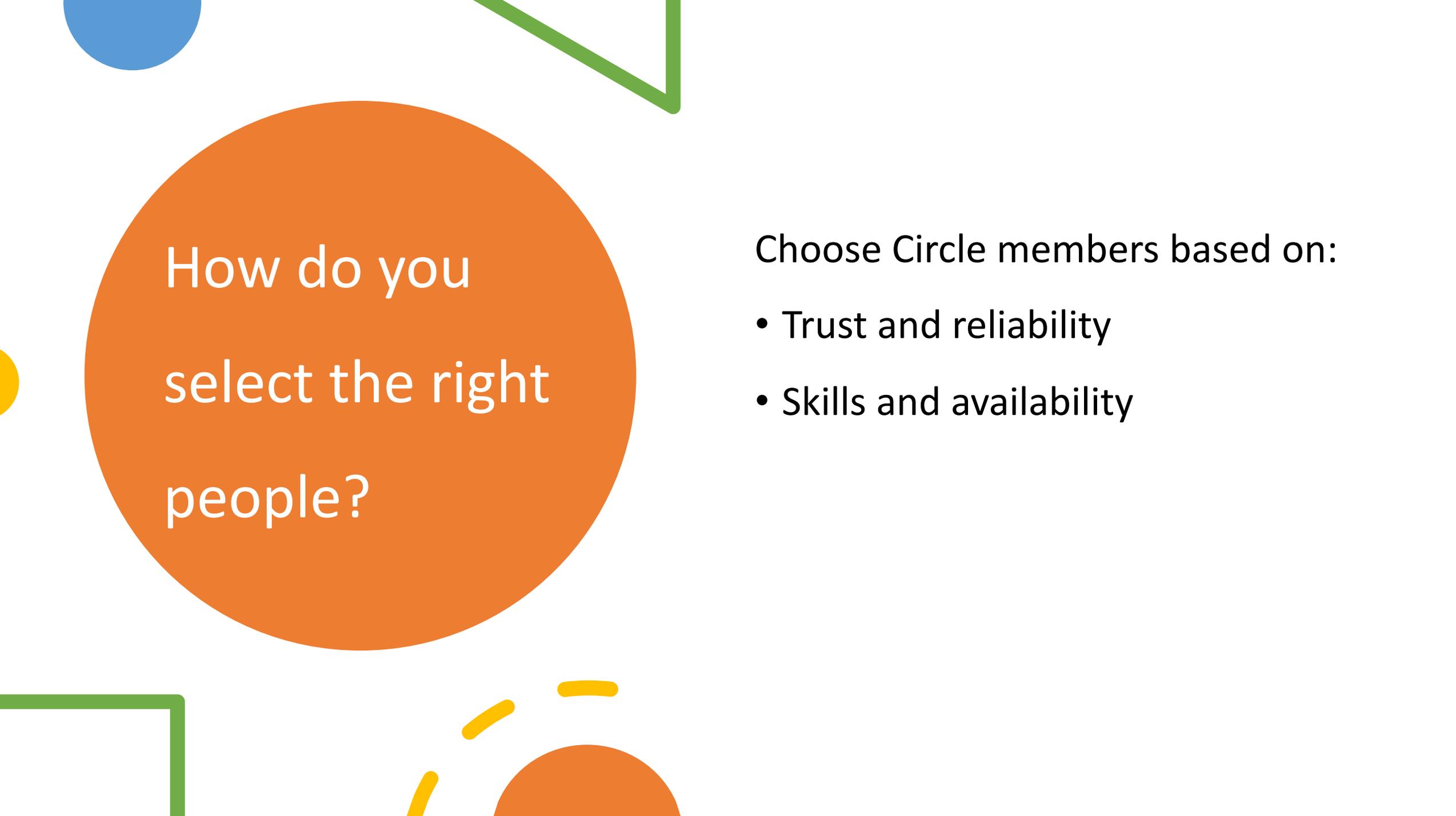
- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Professionals

*But all of them should have been chosen by you and all should understand the importance of their commitment to you.



What are some responsibilities of circle members?

- #1 most important: support your leadership!
- Participate in Life Plan or other meetings as needed.
- Help you with tasks agreed upon by you and your circle of support.



How do you
select the right
people?

Choose Circle members based on:

- Trust and reliability
- Skills and availability



How do you
select the right
people?

Trust and Reliability:

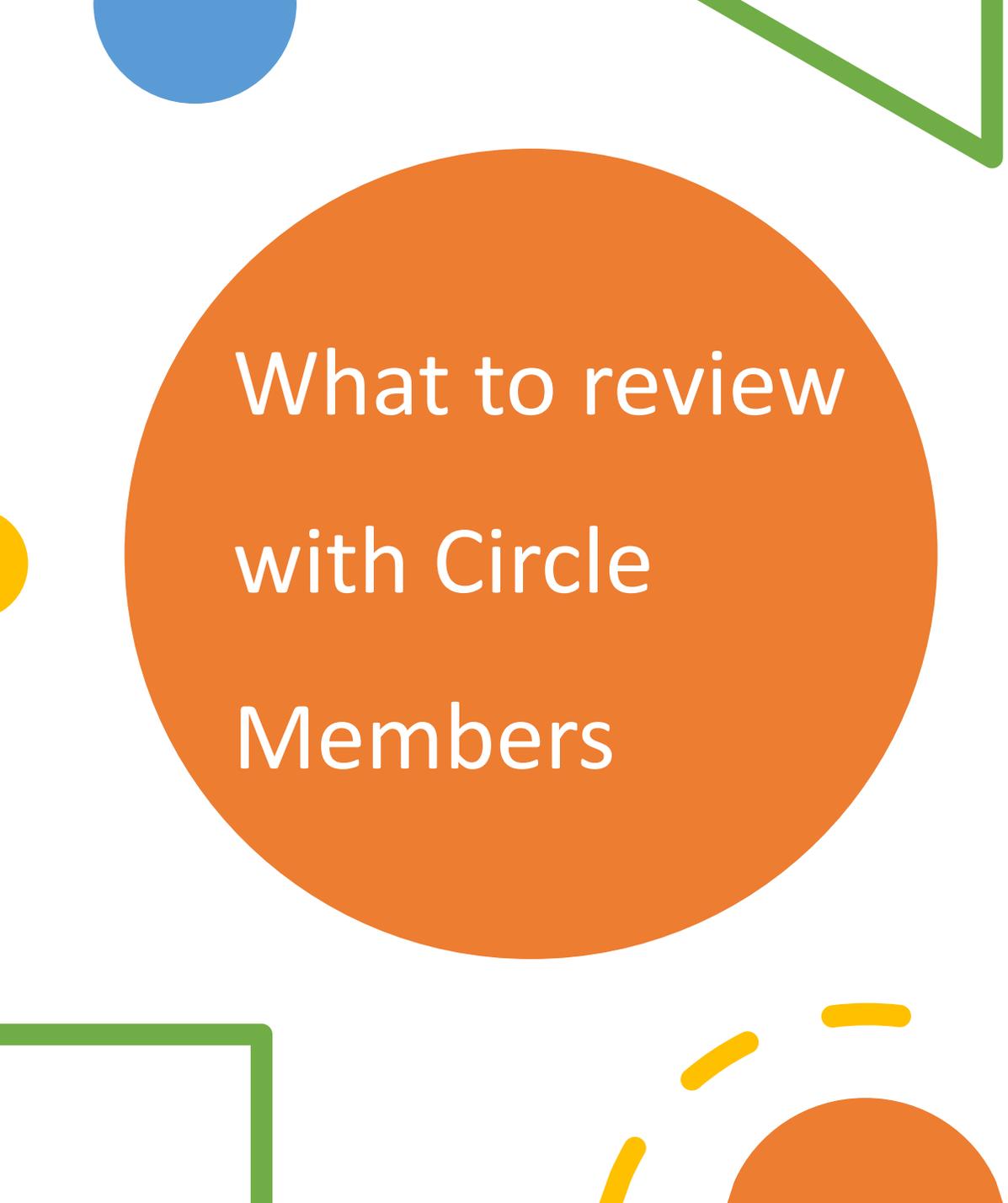
- Think about who you trust.
- Choose from those who have been helpful and supportive over time.
- Know each other well.
- Remember, liking a person and having reasons to trust a person are not the same thing.



How do you
select the right
people?

Skills and availability:

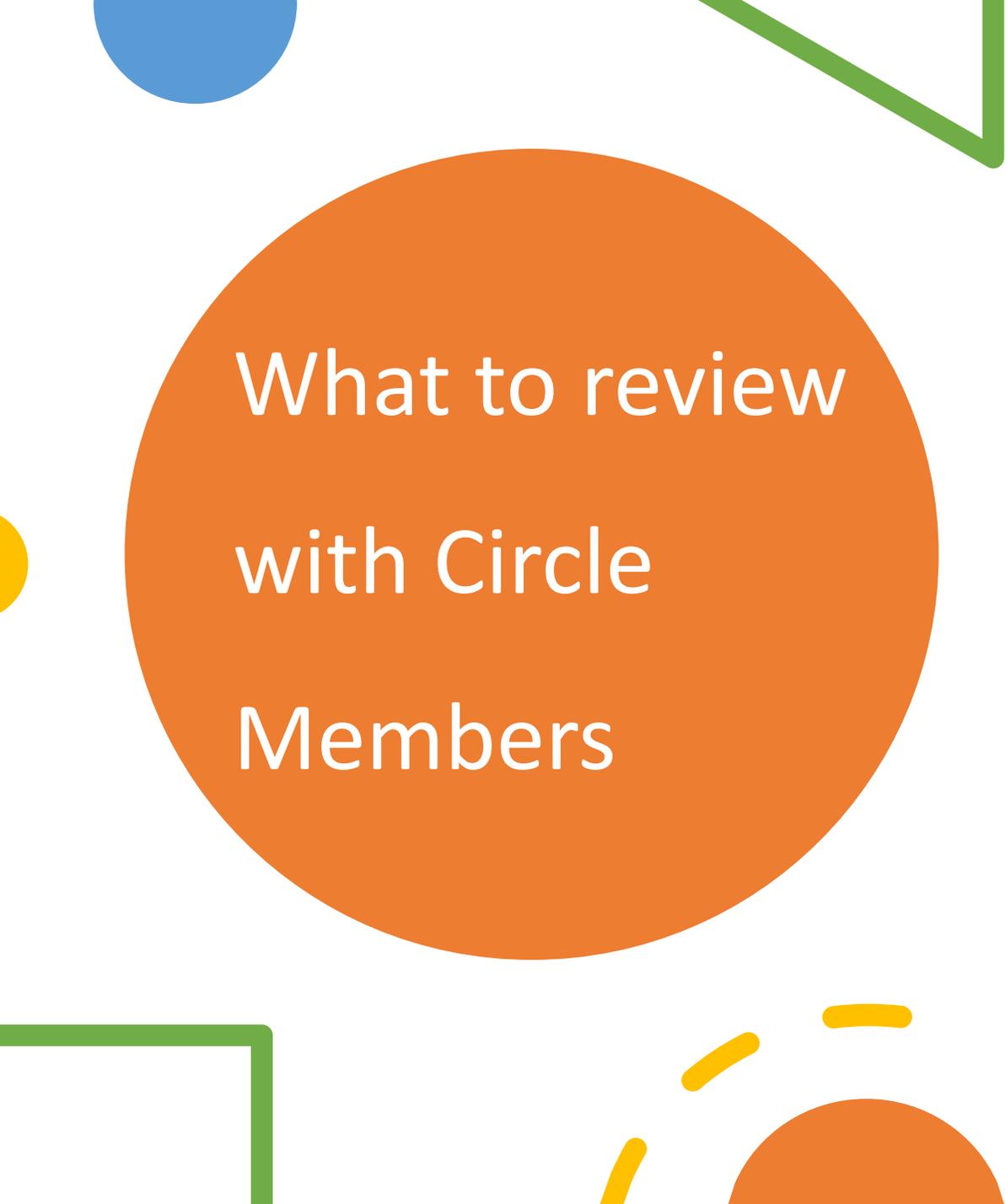
- Does the person have the skills and knowledge to help you?
- Does the person have the time to help you when needed?
- Don't forget about other people with disabilities who have the skills and knowledge to help you in one or more areas.



What to review with Circle Members

3 Things:

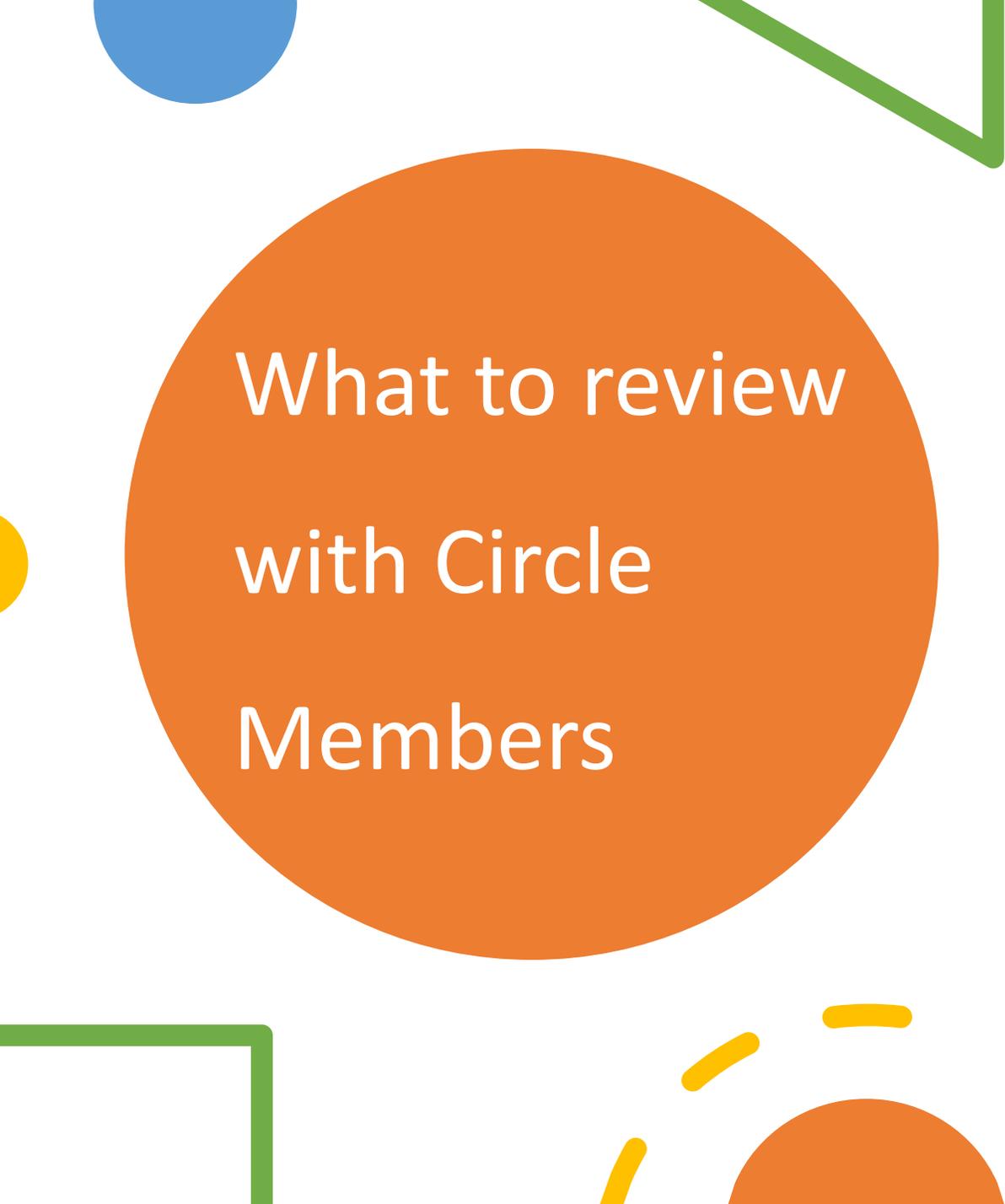
- 1) Meeting schedule
- 2) Your priorities/objectives
- 3) Your expectations



What to review with Circle Members

1) Meeting schedule

- Types of meetings you need them to attend
 - How often you meet with your circle/circle members
- 



What to review with Circle Members

2) Your priorities/objectives

- Big picture (The life you want)
 - Things you want to change now
 - Pressing issues/concerns
- 



What to review with Circle Members

3) Your expectations

- Supporting your leadership.
- Respectful communication
- Reliable when you need them

Questions / Comments

- What are challenges you have experienced with selecting circle members?
- What has worked for you?





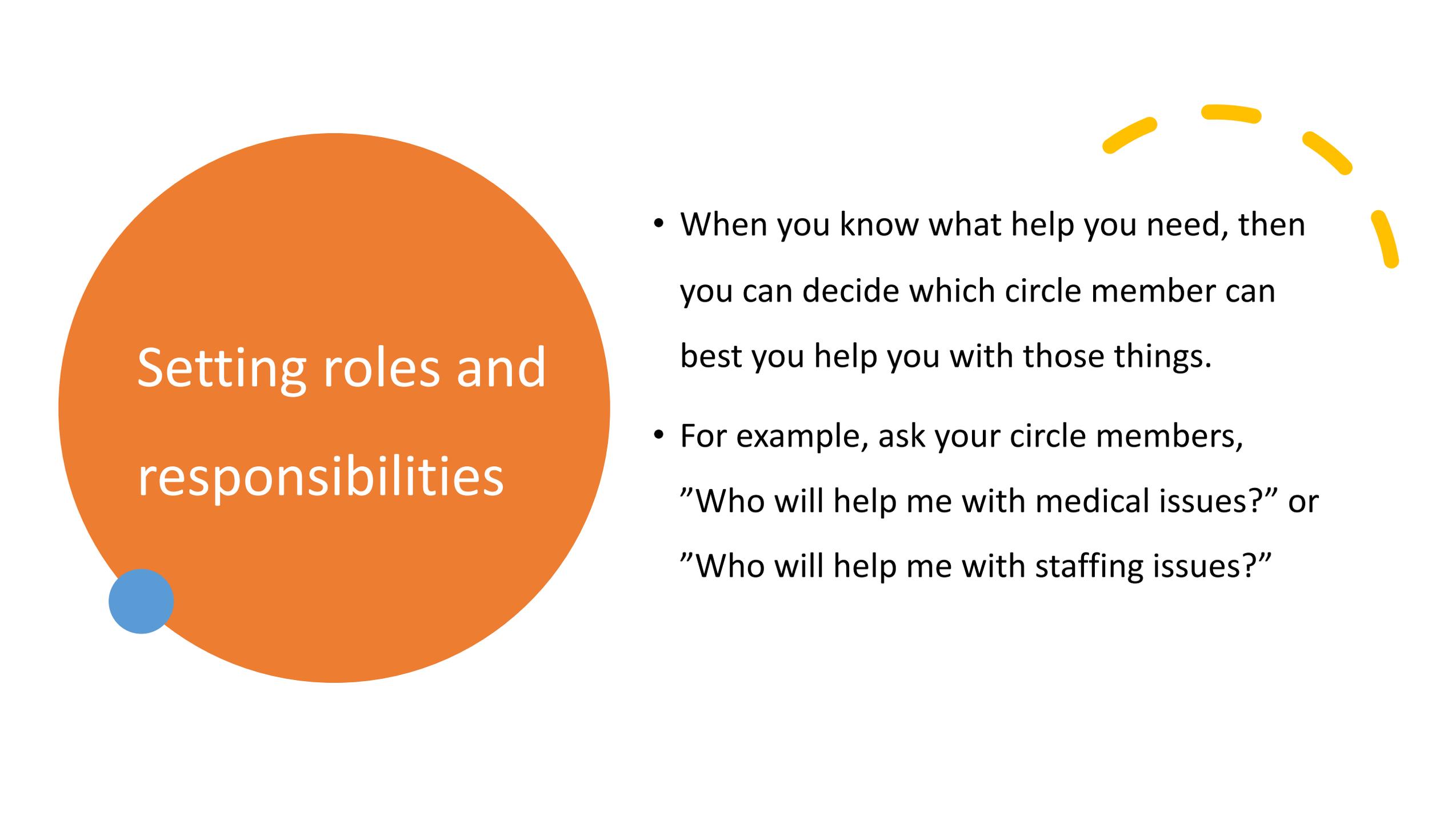
Understand your
own strengths
and needs.

- Ask yourself, “What am I good at?”
- Ask yourself, “What things do I need help with?”



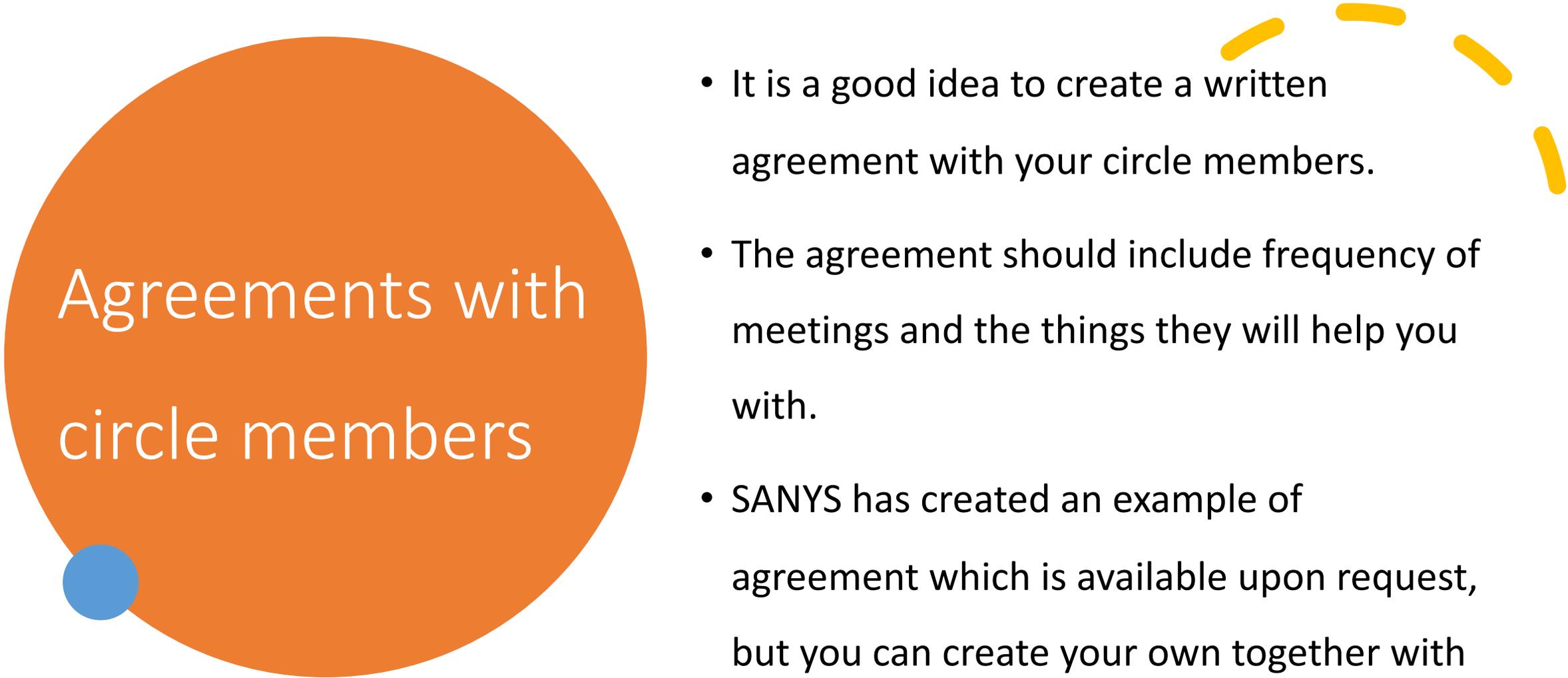
Examples of areas
in which you may
need support:

- Medical issues (appts, phone calls, etc.)
- Financial/Money management
- Staffing and scheduling
- Adaptive equipment
- Housing
- General activities (researching, planning)
- Conflict Resolution
- Meeting Planning/Agenda Setting



Setting roles and responsibilities

- When you know what help you need, then you can decide which circle member can best help you with those things.
- For example, ask your circle members, “Who will help me with medical issues?” or “Who will help me with staffing issues?”



Agreements with circle members

- It is a good idea to create a written agreement with your circle members.
- The agreement should include frequency of meetings and the things they will help you with.
- SANYS has created an example of agreement which is available upon request, but you can create your own together with your circle.

Questions / Comments

- What are some ways that your circle members support you?
- How do you decide what you need help with?
- How do you decide who helps you?





Your Circle and meetings



Planning the meeting:

- If needed, ask someone in your Circle to help you decide who plans and facilitates your meeting.
- They can also help you review important priorities for the meeting with other circle members or other professionals before the meeting happens.



Your Circle and meetings



At the Meeting:

- If needed, circle members can help you and others remember that you are in charge. It may be helpful for a fellow self-advocate to offer peer support with this.
- Circle members can also help you and others focus on your priorities.



Your Circle and meetings

After the meeting:



- Circle members and other professionals may have tasks they agreed to follow up on your behalf.
- A circle member can help you keep track of those tasks.
- A circle member can also help you get updates from other circle members and professionals.

Questions/ Comments

- What are some challenges you have with effective circle meetings (including life plan meetings)?
- What are ways you have found to make your circle meetings work better?





Evaluating your circle

Ask Yourself:

- Are you respected/are you in charge?
- Are the right people doing the right things?
- Are you getting help when you need it?
- Are your circle members attending meetings when agreed?
- Does your life plan show your wants and needs?



Evaluating your circle

- If you find that the answer to any of these questions is no, you need to review with your circle members.
- You may need to come to new agreements about who helps you with what.
- You may need to add/replace circle members.
- You may need to add help/supports outside of your circle.



Questions and Comments:

- Do you evaluate your circle of support?
- How do you decide if it is working?



Final Thoughts and Questions.

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Disabilities

