



Touchstones[®] for Circles of Trust / Ceili Dé Meetings

Give and receive welcome. People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

Be present as fully as possible. Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand. This is not a 'share or die' event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth. Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using 'I' statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting. This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to help. But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making peace for the inner teacher.

Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions. Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us 'hear each other into deeper speech.'

When the going gets rough, turn to wonder. Turn from reaction and judgement to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, 'I wonder why they think / feel this way?' or 'I wonder what my own reaction teaches me about myself?' Set aside judgment to listen to others - and to yourself - more deeply.

Attend to your own inner teacher. We learn from others, of course. But as we explore poems, stories, questions, and silence in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.

Trust and learn from the silence. Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

Observe deep confidentiality. Safety is built when we can trust that our own words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.

Know that it's possible to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived. Know that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.

These Touchstones ® were developed by the Centre for Courage and Renewal
www.couragerenewal.org

WHAT IS “FORMATION?”

Formation, assumes that every person has access to an inner source of truth, named in various wisdom traditions as soul, spirit, or heart---a source of strength and guidance that is the place of truth telling within us where we know the difference between reality and illusion. The work of formation involves creating a quiet, focused, disciplined space—a circle of trust—in which the noise within us and around us can subside and we can begin to hear our own inner voice. A personal and communal process, formation invites us to reclaim our own wholeness and vocational clarity and recognize the vital relationship between the inner life of mind and spirit and the outer life of work and service in the world.