



Touchstones

for Creating Trustworthy Space

The Courage Way Practice

Touchstones are our operating guidelines for holding the meaningful conversations of inner work and trust building. They are based in the Circle of Trust® approach developed by the Center for Courage & Renewal and Parker J. Palmer. Touchstones form strong boundaries for interactions and are designed to help us reconsider the different ways we relate to ourselves and to others.

Together, the touchstones help leaders and facilitators create a hospitable “container” for conversation. Beyond group settings, touchstones can help you respond with more presence in daily moments of pressure, challenge, and tension. These touchstones can also be adapted to define how you work together with integrity and trust in an organization, community, or network—inviting the best of each person to show up and contribute.

Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this space 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.

Extend 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 does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Speak using “I” statements.

No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

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 space for the inner teacher.

Practice asking honest, open questions.

Instead of offering counsel or corrections, asking honest, open questions helps us “hear each other into deeper speech.”



When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, “I wonder why they feel/think this way?” or “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?” Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.

Commit to and maintain deep confidentiality.

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

Attend to your own inner teacher.

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

Know that it's possible...

to leave this space with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.

Trust and learn from the silence.

Silence, or stillness, can be 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.