

# Touchstones for Circles of Trust in a Brave Space

(Adapted from AWARE-LA ([www.awarela.org](http://www.awarela.org)) and Touchstones by Parker Palmer)

- 1. Be 100% present.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow.
- 2. Extend and presume hospitality.** We all learn most efficiently in spaces that welcome us. Welcome others to this place and presume that you are welcome, too.
- 3. Listen Deeply.** Listen intently to what is said: listen to feelings beneath the words. As Quaker writer Douglas Steere puts it, “Holy listening – to ‘listen’ another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery – may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another.” Listen to yourself as well as others. **Actively listen.** Use your energy to listen to what is said before thinking about how to respond. Notice when defensiveness and denial arise.
- 4. It is never “share or die”.** You will be invited to share in the group circle. The invitation is exactly that. *You* will determine the extent to which you want to participate.
- 5. No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover our own truths, to listen to our own inner teacher. We are *not* here to set someone else straight or to help right another’s wrong.
- 6. Suspend judgment.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, you can listen to the other more fully.
- 7. Work to recognize your privileges.** Use this space to recognize and investigate your privileges (for example: class, gender, sexual orientation, ability). Honor the different experiences we all bring to this space.
- 8. Identify Assumptions.** Our assumptions are usually transparent to us, yet they undergird our worldview. By becoming aware of our assumptions, we can open the sharing to greater possibilities.
- 9. Speak your truth.** You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard, and your contribution respected. Your truth may be different from, even the opposite of, what another person has said. Yet speaking your truth is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. A helpful practice is to use “I” statements.
- 10. Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
- 11. Maintain confidentiality.** Respect the confidential nature and content of what is shared. Be mindful to share the message, not the messenger.
- 12. Be open to new discoveries.** A spirit of discovery helps us reconnect with our passions and embrace more creative ways of leading and nurturing community.
- 13. When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”