

## *Building Circles of Trust*

- \* ***Extend and receive welcome.*** People learn best in relaxed, hospitable spaces.
- \* ***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.***
- \* ***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 of the circle, using "I" statements.
- \* ***No fixing, no saving, no setting each other straight.*** This is one of the hardest guidelines to follow. But it is vital to welcome and make space for our own inner teacher.
- \* ***Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions*** instead of counsel, corrections, etc. With such questions, we help hear each other into deeper speech.
- \* ***When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.*** If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself, "I wonder what brought her to this belief?" "I wonder what she's feeling right now?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment in order 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 problem solving, stories, and questions in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your reactions and responses - to your most important teacher.
- \* ***Trust and learn from the silence.*** Silence is a gift in our noisy world. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.
- \* ***Observe confidentiality*** regarding another's personal statements about themselves or their lives.
- \* ***Know that it is possible*** to leave the class/meeting/circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days, seasons, and years ahead.