

Guideposts*

1. **Be present and welcoming.** Be 100% present. Set aside your cell phones and other technology, along with the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to the circle. Be mindful of your body language. 80% of communication is non-verbal. We all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed.
2. **Listen deeply to learn.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. Listen to yourself also. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting. You will be invited to share in pairs, small groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. *You* will determine the extent of your participation in the circle.
3. **No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover our own truths, to listen to our own inner teacher, to take our own inner journey. We are *not* here to help right another's wrong, to "fix" or "correct" what we perceive as broken or incorrect in another member of the group. If someone cries, please avoid rushing to comfort them. Often, those actions, well-meaning as they may be, serve to quiet the person and shift the attention away from the person's story to the person doing the comforting.
4. **Suspend judgment and assumptions and seek understanding.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully, & thus our perspectives, decisions and actions are more informed. Our assumptions are usually invisible to us, yet they under-gird our worldview and thus our decisions and our actions. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.
5. **Speak your truth and respect the truth of others.** 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 in the circle has said. Speaking your truth is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. *Own* your truth by speaking for yourself, using "I" statements.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature & content of discussions held in the circle. What is said in the circle stays here; what is learned in the circle leaves here. Everyone gets to tell their own story for themselves. If you want to provide feedback on a person's story, ask permission first.
7. **When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: "I wonder what messages they were receiving as a child that led them to think and feel this way?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me?" "I wonder how I can open my heart and mind to build a bridge to common ground?"
8. **Your body does not lie.** As you are speaking and listening, pay attention to your breath and your gut. If you feel tension in your body, notice it, see what it is as to tell you, and breathe into it. Conscious breathing will always serve you and the situation.
9. **Trust the circle.** In the circle, all voices are valued equally. All gifts are welcomed and respected. Within each circle is the genesis of renewal and community well-being. The circle can be the instrument for creating a new community narrative for the sake of future generations.

*Guideposts were developed by Kevin John Fong, Elemental Partners.

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