

CENTER *for*
**COURAGE &
RENEWAL**

Foundations of the Courage & Renewal Approach

Session 2

*The Power of Community and Moving
Towards Personal and Societal Wholeness*

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 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.

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 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.

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 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, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.



“If we are willing to embrace the challenge of becoming whole, we cannot embrace that challenge all alone. At least, not for long: we need trustworthy relationships, tenacious communities of support, if we are to sustain the journey toward an undivided life. That journey has solitary passages, to be sure, and yet it is simply too arduous to take without the assistance of others.


.... That kind of community—one that knows how to welcome the soul and help us hear its voice—I call a ‘circle of trust.’”

– Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

Question for Reflection

- How have the forms of community you've experienced been helpful and/or harmful in listening to your inner teacher and showing up as your authentic self?





“What if we could sit together in circles of honesty and trust, sit in stillness, welcome silence, be patient, discover wonder and mutual gratitude, learn together, and gradually build new confidence in our ability to create spaces in which to hear and speak our unique stories and find our common truths? What if we could learn to listen and let our lives speak? What kind of world could we create together on this earth if we were able to speak to and hear one another from our deepest yearnings and our most heartfelt concerns and dreams?”

– Diana Chapman Walsh

Courage & Renewal

Core Values



We Choose Integrity: Living and working with integrity requires us to develop greater congruence between our inner and outer selves, to live less divided lives. To move towards such wholeness we must become more self-aware and accepting of our gifts and strengths as well as our shadows and limits.

We Choose Authenticity: When we “show up” as whole people and act authentically, those with whom we live and work are more willing to trust us in relationship and leadership. This can lead to transformed workplaces and organizations.

We Choose Diversity: Diversity is a deeply valued source of strength, richness and wisdom for us and for the communities in which we live and work. The capacity to welcome and make space for diverse voices and multiple perspectives is critical to the creation of circles of trust, and to the healing and wholeness needed in our world.

We Choose Community: As we do “inner work,” we are not simply focusing inwardly on ourselves. Rather, we become more aware of the fabric of our connectedness with others in our families, workplaces, and communities. This results in an ongoing sense of responsibility and stewardship of the people and concerns that most matter to us.

Courage & Renewal

Core Values



We Choose Courage: For people whose vocation is serving others, courage is needed to persevere and be “whole-hearted” in the often overwhelming circumstances in which we are trying to make a difference—whether that be in the life of child, patient, congregation or community.

We Choose Love: Our work is grounded in love, by which we mean the capacity to extend ourselves for the sake of another person’s growth. Our work in community stretches us to understand, respect, and support each other, teaching us why learning to love is one of the most demanding disciplines we can choose.

We Choose Hope: Hope is believing and acting on our finest and most dearly held dreams, persisting even when the odds are against them. In the midst of the despair and broken-heartedness experienced by so many in our world today, our work engenders hope for people to live purposeful lives, do meaningful work, and make contributions to succeeding generations.

We Choose Renewal: Just as we experience nature’s cycle of renewal through the seasons, so we experience natural cycles of engagement and withdrawal, love and loss, creativity and despair in our personal lives and work. When we take time to slow down, quiet ourselves and reflect, to renew ourselves and recall our commitments, important changes can happen within us and around us. As we are renewed, we in turn can contribute to the renewal of our professions, workplaces, and communities.

Questions for Reflection

- What are the forces within you and around you that have shaped your experiences of community and your journey toward wholeness?
- How have any of these core values helped you build the kind of community you long for? In what ways have any of these core values been challenging for you to embody?



Community

Somewhere there are people
to whom we can speak with passion
without having the words catch in our throats.
Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us,
eyes will light up as we enter,
voices will celebrate with us
whenever we come into our own power.
Community means strength that joins our strength
to do the work that needs to be done.
Arms to hold us when we falter,
a circle of healing. A circle of friends.
Some place where
we can be free.

from *Dreaming the Dark*, by Starhawk