

CENTER *for*  
**COURAGE &  
RENEWAL**

# Foundations of the Courage & Renewal Approach

*Session 4*

*The Principles and Practices of  
the Courage & Renewal Approach*

**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.





**We live with  
greater integrity  
when we see  
ourselves whole.**



# Questions for Reflection

- How does the object you've chosen help you or remind you to see yourself whole?





## Principles of the Courage & Renewal Approach

1. Everyone has an inner teacher.
2. Inner work requires solitude and community.
3. Inner work must be invitational.
4. Our lives move in cycles like the seasons.
5. An appreciation of paradox enriches our lives and helps us hold greater complexity.
6. We live with greater integrity when we see ourselves whole.
7. A “hidden wholeness” underlies our lives.

## Practices of the Courage & Renewal Approach

1. Creating spaces that are open and hospitable, but resource-rich and charged with expectancy.
2. Committing to no fixing, advising, “saving” or correcting one another.
3. Asking honest, open questions to “hear each other into speech.”
4. Exploring the intersection of the universal stories of human experience with the personal stories of our lives.
5. Using multiple modes of reflection so everyone can find their place and pace.
6. Honoring confidentiality.



# Questions for Reflection

- How are open, honest questions different from other types of questions? In what ways do open, honest questions help create space for the inner teacher?
- In what ways does embracing paradox come naturally to you? In what ways is embracing paradox challenging for you?
- Considering the seasonal metaphor for life's cycles, how would you describe the season of life that you're experiencing right now?





In 1977, testifying before the Royal Commission on the Northern Environment, Grand Chief John Kelly pointed out that we work together by enlarging, by allowing people to join the circle, not by hierarchy, nor by sheer will and force of power. In part he said: I do not know if you feel the throbbing of the land in your chest and if you feel the bear is your brother with a spirit purer and stronger than yours, or if the elk is on a higher level of life than is man. You may not share the same spiritual anguish as I see the earth ravaged by a stranger, but you can no longer escape my fate as the soil turns barren and rivers poison. Much against my will, and probably yours, time and circumstance have put us together in the same circle... my danger is your danger too.”

What we understand from this statement is a circle allows everyone to see each other, touch each other, and lose fear of each other. The Other is no longer separate, no longer above or beneath, no longer unknown, but a part of a greater circle... In a circle we have to listen to each other's stories. In a circle, we have to meet as persons, and we have to acknowledge that we share a culture or heritage or even just the land we are standing on. And we cannot deny to others the right to belong. It is the most profound acknowledgement of our belonging to the human race.”

Former Canadian Governor General Adrienne Clarkson: 2014 CBC Massey lectures, Belonging: The Paradox of Citizenship

