

# Touchstones #1

Welcome, Presence, Invitation What about this Touchstone challenges you and how is it a gift for you? How have you seen this Touchstone at work in professional or personal circumstances? What are you curious about when you consider this Touchstone?

**MIKE SAVER** APR 24, 2023 05:57PM UTC

## Give & Receive Welcome

### Challenge

Past experience — "welcoming the stranger" involves recognizing parts of myself in the stranger. Is this really welcoming them? What happens if I allow them to remain strange and unknowable? Helpful to reflect on myself as the stranger and others as strangers and the thresholds of welcome.

### Challenge

I have specific ideas of what it means to be welcome and hospitable. What happens if people's ways are not aligned with one's values?

Foundational. Connects to other TS.

But what does it mean to create a welcoming space? Related to next two. It's a lot.

### Challenge

Giving AND receiving difficult. Sometimes intention of welcome is clear, but it may feel that there's an agenda to the welcoming. subtle coercion. Other times it has felt smothering. I feel most welcome when there is room for things to appear.

### Experience

At the beginning of a group session (retreat, etc.), I've found that a different type of collective experience, not dependent on individual expression, can be a powerful welcome--for example, simply playing a piece of music for all to experience, reading a poem, etc.

### Curious

What does it mean to really welcome? And how much rests on the welcomer vs the welcomed?

### Gift

This is what makes them so special and rare. Not every space (even those that seem space) operate in this way. We are all active participants in creating a shared space.

### Gift

My world tries to carefully teach me that everything has a price. It is an extravagant gift to be offered a free place at the table of hospitality where I can come just as I am.

### Gift

Reminds me of receptive listening

### Gift

The mutual exchange of learning is what makes me feel alive

### Challenge

Given the challenge as human to see beyond what we can see, beyond our experience, see into our blindspots - how can we really welcome those who are beyond what we are aware of. Not sure that question makes sense but feeling like we don't know what we don't know...and what if part of what we don't know is how to welcome certain folks?

### Challenge

I am not sure how I feel about the word hospitality and the power contained in the word - how are we equal?

## Challenge

Can be dangerous to maintain a space of welcome. Where are the boundaries? What will I do if someone abuses my welcome?

## Gift

Intentional welcome required a pause to see who you're welcoming. Really love and appreciate that reminder to welcome because it's also a reminder to slow down enough to see

Expands me. Goes beyond the surface. Counteract your biases.

**Welcome - feeling welcome: can it be measured by one's capacity to share and give of themselves and being open to receive from others the gift that welcoming offers**

receiving welcome requires that we show up in spaces that aren't our own

Bringing to mind the choices that I have to do these things. What am I welcoming in this moment?

Giving and receiving welcome takes a certain amount of vulnerability on the part of both (or all) individuals involved

## Hospitality

When gathering in a physical room, it's important to ensure that every body that enters feels comfortable. This requires sensitivity to height differences (stools or yoga blocks for shorter people to rest feet on are helpful), differently sized chairs (arms are restrictive for some), dimmable or diffuse lighting, ambient temperature checks, air flow, background noise, etc. Ask attendees what they need to be comfortable.

## Seen: in church and other organizational settings

newcomers nervous about fitting in with folks who have been around a while, and the folks who have been around feeling anxious about not being interesting or \_\_\_\_\_ enough for the new folks. Newcomers feel unwelcome and old-timers feel unseen/undervalued and the reality is that it's just because everyone is afraid to talk to everyone else

Learning curve: Welcoming space for me is not necessarily the same for someone else. Tired of spaces being called welcoming but being driven by one orientation or culture.

## Rock the GIF game

Many people feel especially welcomed with the use of GIFs and emoji.



## Curious: How can welcome be experienced with multiple senses?

What does welcome look, feel, smell, sound, taste like? What are the words that speak welcome to me and how have I been surprised by learning the words that speak welcome to others? What kind of space can I offer that welcomes others?

## How have I seen this at work

When one takes time to connect with others, show care and concern for one another.

## to me this looks like

food, flowers, tea, breaks, nametags, everybody can hear and see (access) what is going on. Warmth.

## Welcome

"Welcome" feels very invitational, so it's available but not insisted, and in that way, it aligns well with offering by invitation.

## Gift:

The author Jerry Colonna writes about how we humans look for "love, safety, and belonging". Welcome helps address all.

## Courage & Diversity

Courage is a prerequisite for receiving welcome in highly diverse spaces, or when an assumption of safety is simply not plausible.

## Challenge:

Mistrust makes it difficult to receive welcome

## Challenge: Fear sometimes makes giving welcome difficult.

## Gift :

Makes one feel welcome, belonging

## Curious: How do we create spaces of welcome within institutions that are less than welcoming?

## Challenge/curious: What does hospitable mean in diverse communities?

## Curious: Do people want open spaces in the workplace or only "efficient" spaces for conversation?

## Challenge: Fear makes welcome hard to receive

Past experiences can create pre-conscious biases towards defensive reaction to various cues in the environment.

Our perception of safety is a prerequisite to receiving welcome.

## Curious: What are all the different ways that help people feel welcome? What feels welcome to one person may feel uncomfortable for another.

## Challenge: Sometimes it's hard to feel welcoming to someone who says or does something that I feel is "harmful".

## Challenge: Judgement

When someone breaks some expectation I carry (even unconsciously) of proper or decorous behavior, I've been programmed (cultural, familial, etc) to guard or limit the welcoming.

## Challenge

To welcome oneself

## Challenge

Do I know well enough what will be welcoming? What is a good welcome?

## Gift

The double-sidedness, the both/and of this: give AND receive welcome. Be welcoming and be welcome

## Challenge

A lot of things that would make a space especially welcoming for me seem to be oft-regarded as a bit peculiar or unwelcoming by others (I am self-diagnosed as autistic and tend to think this is connected to my being out-of-step with the typical welcome).

## People learn best in hospitable spaces. In circles of trust we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

## Be Present as Fully as Possible

## Challenge

I've wondered if more ground rules needed to be in place.

## Gift

When I'm present with young kids, I'm more at ease. And at work, "as fully as possible" gives us room to acknowledge when we're not going to be able to be so. A clear agenda helps with this.

## Gift

Gift to be fully present and to be with others who are fully present. This informs how I show up at work. showing up as fully as possible creates a different space.

## Gift

Appreciate "as possible."

## Challenge

In spaces where I don't know people, it's hard to get beyond inner dialogue and accept welcome. Not so much about distraction as it is about self-doubt/self-consciousness.

It seems that there's a baseline of needs that are important to attend to in order to be able to be present for others. e.g., adequate sleep/rest, food, some level of peace of mind. When I am not well or grounded, then it is difficult to be present for others.

## Awareness

Presence feels so much more accessible when vulnerability, authenticity, curiosity are in the space.

## Gift

My failings are a part of this circle?

My doubts are a welcome guest in this circle?

My question, "what in the hell am I doing here?" is a welcome question in this circle.

Wherever I am, this community is promising that they can hold it with me.

## Challenge

I find it SO much more difficult to be present online than I do in person. I tend to be more much more easily distracted, antsy, tired, etc, when online.

## Gift

"As fully as possible" is one of the gifts of this touchstone--and also recognizes that what looks like "presence" for me may look different than what "presence" looks like for someone else.

## Gift

Come as you are.

## Gift/curious

It is still working in me how what I don't do or say is also something that is present/available to me in these spaces.

## Gift

Always a gift to be present - single tasking is the way.

## BE Present as Fully as Possible

Presence requires trust and vulnerability requires feeling safe in a space and with others.

The more I can offer these to myself, the better I get at offering them to others.

Spaciousness enables these touchstones in ways that are more powerful.

## It takes time...

Shifting to being fully present in this retreat takes time to shift those attention gears. Having the settling in time helps.

## Roles can divide

When you spend a lot of your time inhabiting a particular role (such as an educator), it can be really hard to not be pulled back into that role in other contexts.

## Curious

How to work with people who just haven't yet fully perceived the divisions in their lives. Is recognizing this a prerequisite for moving towards touchstone's practice of presence?

## I love this question!

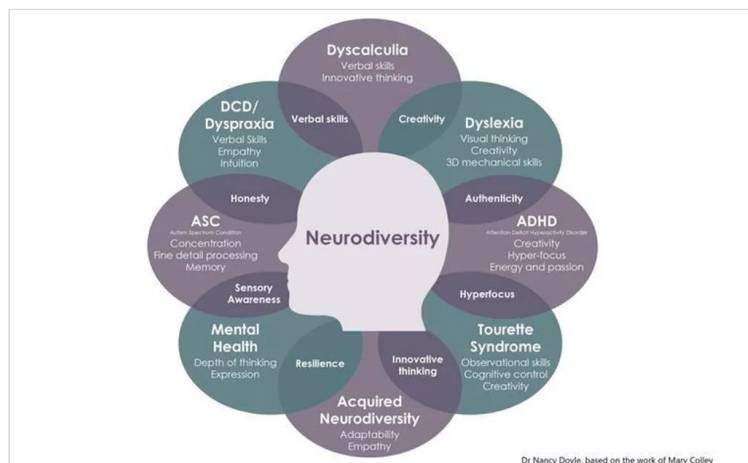
This feels like a challenge worth investigating further. <3



**Challenge:** recognizing the gift that my own full presence is to myself (as well as to others) and not something I do to meet an expectation of someone else

**Difference:** not everyone "looks" present when they are

You cannot discern presence simply by observing someone. Eye contact, stillness, and nonverbal cues are cultural norms around presence, but neurodivergent participants will actually be taken out of presence by engaging in this way.



I'm thankful for the ways that neurodiverse young adults have opened my mind to the multitude of expressions of presence

## Gift

'As possible' comes as a great relief to me. Sometimes I will arrive with nervous system jangling and it's as important to notice and

acknowledge the limits of my ability to be present on any given day.

**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**

## Gift

A space of invitation is a trauma sensitive approach because we don't know what we don't know.

## Gifts

Human crave autonomy. It's another kind of welcome.

## Gift

Parker story. Listening sessions at work make it clear that people find it meaningful to have their participation be invitational.

## Gift

Has seen this with a mother with dementia. Sometimes, if you invite folks with dementia to do something with you, it has a different impact than, "now it's time...."

## Gift

Connection between "invitation" and "welcome." When I've felt most welcome has been in places where there was invitation and not demand.

Necessary to hold with other touchstones. Invitation is helpful, and wants to hear that everyone gets the invitation, not just dominate voices/personalities, etc.

## Gift

Incredibly freeing. Hesitant to speak in groups, but speak more because of this. Using the word "invite" more.

## Gift

Most freeing touchstone. Upbringing, compelled to comply to adults. Practices this consistently.

## Gift

This is a powerful reminder that when we're tuned into ourselves we can sense when we want to share, and also trust when we don't. It's not about performing or looking good.

## Gift

A reminder that you are the expert on yourself. You know when you need to speak.

## Gift

This enables me to be present, and fully present in the space

## Gift and Challenge

This is a true gift to me as I engage and interact with groups and process experiences in "quiet" ways. The challenge for me is that even in Circles of Trust, I'm not always convinced (don't trust?) that there's not an expectation for me to interact in a typical way (that is, by sharing aloud). I know that may be on me and not the group--but maybe not always?

## A powerful practice

for me has been to internalize this touchstone in situations where "demand" is the prevailing expectation. How can I grant myself permission to choose how or if I will engage? To identify what my soul most needs, and then do it?

## By Invitation...

By invitation is spoken but is it authentic. Internalize perception wonders whether what I say really matter or will it really change things. The cultural and community dynamics of history, seldom invites but often demands.

Causes me to be in touch with my own body. Do I feel compelled by anxiety, judgment, do I really need to say this? Love that about it.

How powerful the world would be if we could get everyone to the same play of upholding these three.

## Gift

It's a gift when a reluctant participant finds their voice and chooses to share something.

## Challenge

In some settings, we are expected to contribute and if we do not, we are perceived as lacking ideas to share.

So true. It helps introverts to have collaborative tools like jamboard and padlet that gives them "thinking time."

## Struggle... on the other hand

Pedagogically I have encountered situations where the Demand is what pushes someone into a place of confidence that leads them to life giving participation.

Judicious demands can be the little push someone needs. (we need each other to bump up against us and turn us into smoothed pearls sometimes, I think).

Discerning that outside a setting calling for invitation only or 'demand only (like a court setting, I guess) demands discernment I suppose that can be a real struggle for me.

## Gift

It is freeing not to be compelled to share.

This is something I cherish about C&R gatherings - that this touchstone is part of the culture.

I agree!

## challenge:

for some of us, the invitation can take a while to embrace / believe. so time is needed...

## Challenge: Herd Instinct

In our opening sharing this morning, I didn't feel compelled to share... until a critical threshold of people shared, and more hands were raised. As soon as it felt like "everyone" is sharing, the compulsion to contribute became very strong.

## Agree--thanks

What made me share was that I am always curious about who the others are on the screen. So I felt, maybe encouraged to share because others are like the same.

## Thanks

That's brave to share.

## challenge:

It's a challenge if you have to assign a "participation grade."

## Challenge:

If we are not well-acquainted with our inner teacher, it can be hard to hear her/him/them.



## Curious: how deep do we each need to dig within to even know what our soul needs?

**Challenge: making sure that the process we use to invite sharing doesn't compel participation at a certain time, i.e. going around a circle, etc.**

## Internal pressure to share

Even as we invite participation (or not) as each person feels called, it takes a lot of courage and self-confidence to not share when it feels like everyone else is, or there's an implicit desire for everyone to share. The norm of compliance is hard to override individually.

## Challenge:

Our competitive society encourages, often demands, that we participate to be relevant.

## Challenge (cont'd)

... while in other aspects of the same society participation can demanded purely for performative reasons, where it is cheapened, and thus habits of serious thoughtful participation is treated as very relevant but is actually not at all... cheapening our practice of contributing.

## I feel this.

It's why Circles of Trust that can hold true to these touchstones feel so radical to me. <3



## Personal Experience

This touchstone is so crucial to my participation. For years I was so terrified of speaking up in groups or in society at large. The ability to be present without obligation to speak enabled me to gain confidence and relax (and thus in time brought me to the place where I felt able and ready to speak). This was a long process. Knowing I don't have to actively 'join in' makes it much more likely that I will choose to 'join in' (rather than run away or never opt to join a group in the first place).

## Challenge

Having experienced 'invitation not demand' as such a precious gift in settings like this I find am now very intolerant of 'demand-y' spaces!

**This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your inner teacher calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your inner self knows your needs better than we do.**

