**1-21-16**

**Practices of the Circle of Trust Approach**

from http://www.couragerenewal.org/approach/#practices

In this culture, we know how to create spaces that invite the intellect to show up, to argue its case, to make its point. We know how to create spaces that invite the emotions to show up, to express anger or joy. We know how to create spaces that invite the will to show up, to consolidate effort and energy round a common task. And we surely know how to create spaces that invite the ego to show up, preening itself and claiming its turf! But we seem to know very little about creating spaces that invite the soul to show up, this core of ourselves, our selfhood.  
—Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

1. **Creating spaces that are open and hospitable, but resource-rich and charged with expectancy.**In a Circle of Trust, we are invited to slow down, listen and reflect in a quiet and focused space. At the same time, we engage in dialogue with others in the circle—a dialogue about things that matter. As this “sorting and sifting” goes on, and we are able to clarify and affirm our truth in the presence of others, that truth is more likely to overflow into our work and lives.
2. **Committing to no fixing, advising, “saving” or correcting one another.**Everything we do is guided by this simple rule, one that honors the primacy and integrity of the inner teacher. When we are free from external judgment, we are more likely to have an honest conversation with ourselves and learn to check and correct ourselves from within.
3. **Asking honest, open questions to “hear each other into speech.”**Instead of advising each other, we learn to listen deeply and ask questions that help others hear their own inner wisdom more clearly. As we learn to ask questions that are not advice in disguise, that have no other purpose than to help someone listen to the inner teacher, all of us learn and grow.
4. **Exploring the intersection of the universal stories of human experience with the personal stories of our lives.**  
   Guided conversations focused on a poem, a teaching story, a piece of music or a work of art—drawn from diverse cultures and wisdom traditions—invite us to reflect on the “big questions” of our lives, allowing each person to intersect and explore them in his or her own way.
5. **Using multiple modes of reflection so everyone can find his or her place and pace.**In Circles of Trust, we speak and we listen. We explore important questions in large group conversation and dialogues in small groups. We make time for individual reflection and journaling. We respect nonverbal ways of learning, including music, movement and the arts. We honor the educative power of silence and the healing power of laughter. Together we weave a “tapestry of truth” with many and diverse threads, creating a pattern in which everyone can find a place that both affirms and stretches them.
6. **Honoring confidentiality.**Participants in Circles of Trust understand that nothing said in these circles will be revealed outside the circle and that things said by participants will not be pursued when a session ends, unless the speaker requests it.

Results of Circles of Trust

Principles and practices from the Circle of Trust approach can be applied to your daily life and work.

Participants in a Circle of Trust return to their homes, workplaces and communities, taking important resources with them. People gain greater access to the inner teacher and a new depth of self-knowledge, often resulting in a clearer sense of guidance for their personal and professional lives and a resolve to live closer to their core commitments.

**As a result of participating in circles of trust people report:**

* a stronger sense of purpose and integrity
* expanded capacity to be fully present to others in ways that affirm and heal
* increased skill in asking the honest, open questions that help others uncover their own inner wisdom
* greater confidence to seek or create communities of support
* increased understanding, appreciation and respect for human differences, based in deeper awareness of the identity and  integrity of ourselves and others
* greater capacity to build the relational trust that helps institutions pursue their missions
* more courage to live and lead authentically
* renewed passion for their work or vocation
* a deeper commitment to leadership and service to others

**Resources:**

* Outside speaker Dorinda Carter from Michigan State University, January 29th
* Outside speaker Al Young from University of Michigan, February 12th
* Book - Whistling *Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do (Issues of Our Time)* by Claude M. Steele (Author) Claude M. Steele, who has been called “one of the few great social psychologists,” offers a vivid first-person account of the research that supports his groundbreaking conclusions on stereotypes and identity. He sheds new light on American social phenomena from racial and gender gaps in test scores to the belief in the superior athletic prowess of black men, and lays out a plan for mitigating these “stereotype threats” and reshaping American identities.

**Discussion today:**

Faculty Identities and the Challenge of Diversity: Reflections on Teaching in Higher Education

1. **Raced and Gendered Culture**
   1. Individualistic value orientation
   2. Universalistic norms
   3. Research vs. undergraduate education
   4. Emphasis on the production of research that advances academic theory and disciplinary goals over the expansion of public knowledge
2. **Campus and classroom culture**
3. **Faculty social identity**
4. **In departments with Peers/Colleagues**
5. **Agency in the face of pressure**