

APPENDIX II

Touchstones for Couples' Group Work

FACILITATORS OF COURAGE & RENEWAL programs use these Touchstones to define clear boundaries in a Circle of Trust retreat, the kinds of boundaries that create trustworthy space for the soul. These Touchstones support any relationship, workplace, community, or other groups where we want to honor the integrity of the individual and build relational trust. Download a printable version at www.sidebysideaging.com.

EXTEND AND RECEIVE WELCOME.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other by giving and receiving hospitality, both to what comes up from within, as well as what is shared in the community.

WHAT IS OFFERED IN THIS CIRCLE IS BY INVITATION, NOT DEMAND.

This is not a “share or die” event! During this meeting, 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 THE TRUTH OF OTHER PEOPLE.

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, NO SAVING, NO ADVISING, AND NO CORRECTING EACH OTHER.

This is one of the hardest guidelines. But it is vital to welcoming the soul, and for making space for the Inner teacher. When someone speaks in this gathering, we simply listen and receive their sharing with silent attention.

WHEN THE GOING GETS ROUGH, TURN TO WONDER.

If you feel judgmental, or defensive, ask yourself, “I wonder what brought her to this belief?” “I wonder what he's feeling right now?” “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 stories, questions, and silence, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So, pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.

OBSERVE DEEP CONFIDENTIALITY.

Nothing said in this meeting will ever be repeated to other people.

Adapted from the Circle of Trust® Touchstones of the Center for Courage & Renewal, founded by author/educator Parker J. Palmer. See www.couragerenewal.org/courage-renewal-approach/

Appendix II from *Side by Side: The Sacred Art of Couples Aging with Wisdom & Love* by Caryl & Jay Casbon. Visit www.SidebySideAging.com for more resources.