

Formation is journeying, individually and in community, to our inner selves, our hearts and souls, to identify our true selves and our deep integrity.  
From this center proceeds our action."

- Parker J. Palmer

## TOUCHSTONES

Ideas that increase the likelihood of our creating a safe space for individual work in community.

1. **Be 100% present, extending and presuming welcome.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Bring all of yourself to the work. We all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed as well.
2. **Listen deeply.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. As Quaker writer Douglas Steere puts it, "Holy listening to 'listen' another's soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery – may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another." Listen to yourself as well as to others. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.
3. **It is never "share or die."** You will be invited to share in pairs, small 'groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. *You* will determine the extent to which you want to participate in our discussions and activities.
4. **No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover our own truths, to listen to our own inner teacher, to take our own inner journey. We are *not* here to set someone else straight, or to help right another's wrong, to "fix" what we perceive as broken in another member of the group.
5. **Suspend judgment.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.
6. **Identify assumptions.** Our assumptions are usually invisible to *us*, yet they undergird our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.
7. **Speak your truth.** You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Your truth may be different from, even the opposite of what another person in the circle has said. Yet speaking your truth is simply that – it is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. *Own* your truth by remembering to speak only for yourself. Using the first person "I" rather than "you" or "everyone" clearly communicates the personal nature of your expression.
8. **Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker as well – be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have just said. This process allows others time to fully listen before reflecting on their own reactions.
9. **Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions held in the formation circle. Allow what is said in the circle to remain there.
10. **When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: "I wonder what brought her to this place?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me?" "I wonder what he's feeling right now?"
11. **Practice slowing down.** As Thomas Merton and others were already cautioning by the 1960s, even simply the speed of modern life can cause violent damage to the soul. *By* intentionally practicing slowing down we strengthen our ability to extend non-violence to others-and to ourselves.