

## Speaking and Acting with Care and Respect

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*Many organizations have a document that clearly states the expectations for how members of the organization will treat each other and anyone with whom they come in contact in their capacity as members of the organization.*

*The following is a document for Threshold choirs, created by the Diverse and Inclusion Task Force.*

Threshold Choir celebrates and affirms the beauty, dignity, and wholeness of all people and believes that everyone deserves to be treated with kindness from their first to their last breath. (From “Threshold Choir’s Commitment to Cultural Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”)

We understand that there are both conscious/intentional and unconscious/inadvertent choices in language (spoken and written) and behavior that may lead someone to feel unwelcome, uncomfortable, bullied, intimidated, ignored, harassed or otherwise targeted.

We understand that these are (some of the) areas about which someone might experience unwelcome words and/or behavior: race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, skin color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, health (physical or mental), genetic information, parental status, marital status, political affiliation, veteran status, socioeconomic status or background, neuro(a)typicality, appearance, body size, experience, clothing, and unwelcome attention or contact.

Therefore, we agree to the following:

- To treat every human being with honor and respect, affirming their rights and dignity;
- To communicate with kindness and compassion toward all members of our Threshold Choir community and the people we serve; (from the TCI membership agreement)
- To commit ourselves to cultural equity and inclusion in all aspects of TCI, and to take steps to grow in cultural competency as individuals, chapters, and throughout our organization;
- To be open and non-defensive when hearing that our language or behavior has been perceived by someone as unwelcome in any way;
- To make space for everyone with whom we engage to participate, speak up, ask questions, and share their perceptions;
- To identify safe allies who are ready and willing to be with a person who has been targeted, who can hear and not take personally what the targeted person needs to say;
- To allow for a separate place for full expression of the person who has been targeted - especially of hurt and anger;

- To identify and use a thoughtful process that involves deep and open listening, and works toward mutual understanding, to repair a situation in which someone has experienced words or behavior they find targeting in any way. Suggestions for this process include:
  - Set aside enough time, with an opening and closing, to create a container for full participation and deep truth-telling;
  - Come with the expectation of being open to learning, and to be willing to be uncomfortable in the process;
  - Listen more than speak, and do both from the heart;
  - Be willing to make a contract to take steps to learn and grow, and to change thinking, feelings and behavior.

“Wisdom Circles” (see Addendum 1) offers further information about creating a process for listening and repair.

TCI encourages members to work with each other and within their chapters to directly address their concerns whenever possible. If this is not workable:

- A problem or incident may be reported to: \_\_\_\_\_ (*name, email address, phone number of a person identified by the TCI Board – perhaps an Ombudsperson*)
- Resolution of a situation will be determined by \_\_\_\_\_. Decisions will be presented in writing.
- Resolution may include a request for a change in language and/or behavior, a plan for monitoring a situation over a period of time, or a decision to rescind membership in TCI.

## Addendum 1

### **Wisdom Circles - The 10 constants** (permission for use pending)

Wisdom Circles provide the structural foundation for A Co•Creative Path by establishing a set of guidelines called the Ten Constants. These constants have been inspired by councils of indigenous peoples, informed by support and dialogue groups, and drawn from personal experience. The Ten Constants create a safe container that allows participants to tap their innate capacity to relate to each other in a context of wisdom and compassion.

#### Wisdom Circle Constants

- **One: Honor the circle as sacred time and space by doing simple rituals to mark the beginning and end.** A ritual creates a shared sensory experience and a demarcation from ordinary life. Light a candle\*, for example, or take a moment to breathe deeply. Share a brief period of silence or burn some incense or sage. Listen to a selection of evocative music or to a guided meditation. You can be as creative as you want with this.
- **Two: Create a collective center by mutually agreeing upon a topic or intention.** This might be visioning the future, healing wounds, going within to learn more about ourselves, making decision or planning actions that sustain and enrich life for ourselves and others. A group may choose a focus specific to its needs, or it can allow for topics to surface determined by individual needs. A question is usually a useful way to frame the topic. Make a physical center in the middle of the circle.
- **Three: Ask to be informed by our highest human values such as compassion and truth, by the wisdom of those who have gone before us, and by the needs of those yet to be born.** You can also invoke mythical or historical figures who symbolize desired values. One person can speak for the group, or each person can do a personal invocation.
- **Four: Express gratitude for the blessings and teachings of life.** Acknowledge and honor our interdependence with everything in the Web of Life. In silence, or by taking turns, give thanks for those things great and small whose gifts enrich and nourish you.
- **Five: Create a container for full participation and deep truth-telling.** Allow each person to speak without interruption or cross-talk. Use a talking stick (or any object that has symbolic significance). The object may be passed around the circle or taken from and returned to the center. Respect a member's right to silence. Keep everything confidential.
- **Six: Listen from the heart and serve as compassionate witness for other people in the circle.** To be an effective witness requires paying attention to what's being said without interpreting, judging, or trying to "fix" or rescue the person speaking. It also means a willingness to discover something about yourself in the stories of other people.

- Seven: **Speak from the heart and from direct experience.** When you are moved to speak, do so thoughtfully and with care. Avoid abstract, conceptual language, and stay in touch as much as possible with your feelings. As this capacity develops, you may be moved to share those feelings and to say difficult things without self-judgment and without blaming others.
- Eight: **Make room for silence** to enter to allow for reflection, for meditation, for feelings to surface and for a sense of the sacred to emerge as the group proceeds.
- Nine: **Empower each member to be a co-facilitator of the process.** If possible, designate a different person to be the circle-maker each time. This person readies the physical setting, initiates the opening and closing rituals and facilitates consensus on a topic. Encourage each other to give voice to feelings of satisfaction or discomfort with the group's process.
- Ten: **Commit to an ongoing relationship with each person in the circle so as to engender trust and caring among members.** Extend that caring to other people, to the Earth and all her creatures by practicing capacities developed within the wisdom circle in daily life.

Source: [Wisdom Circles: A Guide to Self Discovery and Community Building in Small Groups](#)

\* When using candles or other items that may have scent or smoke, please be aware of possible allergies among group members and take steps to avoid causing harm. (note from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force)