

Express from the Heart
Listen from the Heart
Go to the Heart of the Matter
Be Spontaneous

Council is an ancient, pan-cultural practice that uses a circle format and four common intentions. Council transforms the circle from “everyday” time and space to a sacred container that invokes wholeness and the wisdom of the Whole. There is no hierarchy in the circle. While the facilitators serve to guide the process, they participate fully, willing to risk vulnerability. Delight is found in empowering each voice in the circle and in empowering the expression of the circle as a whole.

Council uses four simple intentions or practices that provide the basis for interaction in the council circle. Each intention is a direction we want to move in, something we practice to the best of our ability, despite any difficulties we might encounter.

Express from the Heart

When we receive the talking piece, whatever we say, we check in with our heart and speak from this place. Heart expression is authentic expression, speaking one’s experience or truth.

Opinion is story robbed of its narrative.

Listen from the Heart

We listen to ourselves, each other, to all that is present, from our heart. Disengaging our judgments and monkey minds, we hear, in a whole new light, things we would miss otherwise. When we catch ourselves in our heads rather than in our hearts, we can imagine our heart as a big ear and listen from this place.

An enemy is someone whose story you have not yet HEARD.

Go to the Heart of the Matter

Aka, Be Lean. Speak to the essence of what wants to be expressed, the kernel. Be aware of the size of the group and the time allotted for the council. We’ve all experienced someone going on with superfluous details or introducing multiple stories, seemingly oblivious to the others in the group. Also, remember there is no requirement to speak in council. When you receive the talking piece, if nothing presents itself, pass it on.

Opinion is the barren flower of the way, the beginning of ignorance. So great minded people abide in the Kernel, not the husk. In the fruit, not the flower. Letting the one go, keeping the other. Tao Te Ching

Be Spontaneous

Rather than preparing what we want to say, be spontaneous. We can’t really listen from the heart if we are rehearsing what we are going to say. When the talking piece comes to us, trust that out of our storehouse of life experiences, or something we’re experience in that moment, that which desires expression will emerge. The safe container created in council and the intention toward spontaneity often elicit long forgotten stories, wildness, tears, all sorts of expressions our heady, civilized selves would never allow, surprising and delighting even ourselves. *Magic happens!*

Adapted from an article by Jill Boulet, council facilitator at the Ojai Foundation, Ojai, CA, 2005