**What is COUNCIL?**

Council is a practice of open, heartfelt expression and attentive, empathic listening. Coming together with the intention of speaking authentically and listening attentively inspires deeper communication, intercultural understanding and the non-violent resolution of conflict. Council is effective in organizations, communities and families that want to move from a hierarchical structure to a partnership model where initiative, responsibility, collaboration and leadership are shared.

**Guiding principles:**

- Don’t interrupt, respect the speaker, witness your internal responses until it’s your times to speak.

- Speak spontaneously, avoiding rehearsing

- See each other as peers

- Value inquiry over advocacy and curiosity over opinion

-Value being truthful over being right

**When we listen from the heart we:**

- Empathize (vs. criticize or judge)

- Stay centered and calm

- Stay present (vs. running away or hiding)

- Witness your internal responses and put them on hold

**When we speak from the heart we:**

- Use “I” statements (vs. “you” – avoid characterizing other’s thoughts/feelings)

- Tell your personal story

- Move toward vulnerability

- Be lean/cut to the chase

- Be spontaneous (vs. Rehearsing)

- Trust your listeners

**COUNCIL INTENTIONS**

The root meaning of the word “intend” is “to stretch’, as one stretches a bowstring “to aim at” something. Unlike a “rule”, and “intention” is something we make up our minds to try our best to do, but we are also aware that it may be very difficult to achieve.

**The Basic Four**:

1. Speak from the heart

2. Listen from the heart

3. Be spontaneous

4. Be lean of expression

Also...

- Confidentiality – speak only your own esperiences

- What serves self, the circle and the highest good

- Welcome and expect contradictory and complementary points of view

**Basic elements of COUNCIL:**

1. A circle

2. A center

3. A beginning

4. An ending

5. Agreed upon intentions

**Thoughts? Ideas on how make it our own?**