



# Touchstones

## Group Agreements for Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Kalamazoo Racial Healing Circles and Virtual Healing Experiences

**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, and presume that your whole self is welcome. Welcome others fully to this place and this work, understanding that we all learn most effectively in spaces that welcome us.

**Speak your truth.** 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 in the circle has said. Speaking your truth is not debating with, or correcting, or interpreting what another has said. Own your truth by speaking only for yourself using “I” statements. Be aware that the impact of your words on others may be very different from your intent.

**Always by invitation.** You will be invited to share in pairs, small groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. It is never a requirement to speak. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate in our discussions and activities. You decide what ‘share only what you can carry’ means to you in this experience.

**Listen deeply.** Listen intently and without interruption to what is said. Listen to the feelings beneath the words and to what resonates with you. “To listen another’s soul into life’, into a condition of disclosure and discovery, may be the greatest service any human being performs for another,” (Douglas Steere). Listen to yourself also. Try to achieve a balance between listening, reflecting, and speaking.

**Maintain confidentiality.** Respect the confidential nature and content of discussions held in the circle. What is said by others in the circle remains there and should never be repeated by another within or beyond the circle. Share only your own story" and what you learned, allowing others to choose how and when to share their stories.

**No language of the soul is privileged over any other language of the soul.** All of us express truths, identities, and beliefs based on the inner and outer experiences that are integral to our humanity. We each have to work to unlearn the socially constructed hierarchy of human value that sustains racism and how it influences our perceptions of ourselves and others. In the circle, everyone's full humanity is welcomed and embraced, and we listen for wisdom from each person, perspective and place.



# Touchstones

## (continued)

**Value feeling as much as knowing.** Emotions are welcome here, and we give ourselves permission to share vulnerably and authentically -- but always at our own pace. Many feelings are not valued or accepted by our society, however they are all a part of our humanity. We each commit to witnessing, engaging, and learning from our own emotions, intuitions, joys, passions and triggers as a part of the healing process.

**No fixing, no saving, no advising.** 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 help right another's wrong, to "fix" or correct what we perceive as broken or incorrect in another member of the group.

**Identify assumptions and suspend judgment.** Our assumptions and judgments 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. By creating a space between judgments and reactions we can listen to others and to ourselves more fully and thus our perspectives, decisions, and actions are more fully informed.

**Respect and learn from silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After another has spoken, take time to reflect and fully listen without filling the space with words. There is space then for every voice in the circle to be heard.

**When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or experiencing challenging emotions, try turning to wonder: "I wonder what she is thinking?" "I wonder what brought him to this place?" "I wonder what they are feeling right now?" "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?"

**Trust the healing process, your own heart and the hearts of others.** The process of healing is a lifetime commitment, both individually and collectively. Know that it is possible to leave with whatever it was you needed and the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.