

Greetings,

Thank you for your interest in [Yoga and Health](#) and our weekly Zoom Meditation Group.

Our practice began in March or April of 2020. The Mayor of Austin, Texas announced a lockdown in an effort to control the spread of SARS COV2 and minimize disease and debility of the disease now known as COVID 19.

A few in our community felt the need for a way to remain centered, calm and hopeful during a time of planetary yet immanent threat and uncertainty. We needed a safe space in which to come together. To breathe together. And then, with the support of each other, to contemplate a deeper meaning of our lives and our role in the world. Finally, each is given the opportunity to speak their truth, which is felt as the wee small voice that speaks to us from the level of our hearts.

Our time together has evolved naturally into "a council of elders". Elders in the sense that we are wise, not necessarily old. Council work provides guidelines so that each participant is aware of their responsibility to one self and to the group. The collective effectively holds sacred space and empowers each participant to speak their truth which is found only in the heart.

AGENDA for a typical Wednesday morning meeting:

We greet one another and new participants introduce themselves to the group (and vice versa).

We then utilize a heart coherence technique to bring us to a place of stillness and deeper connection.

The facilitator shares a guided meditation, a selection of poetry, or an inspirational reading.

We then share a period of silence (5 to 10 minutes).

The process creates space within which we are free to attend to our oft neglected inner life; we give our imagination permission to explore the depth of our authentic nature; and to discover the wisdom that lies deep within.

We then have an opportunity to speak our truth from the level of the heart.

## COUNCIL WORK

The following are guidelines provided by Dr. Bill Plotkin in his guide to SOULCRAFT practices.

Traditionally, a talking piece is used to determine who shall speak. When meeting virtually, we raise our hand when we are ready and the facilitator acknowledges who will speak next.

## Intentions:

When we hold the talking piece, we speak from our heart by way of our emotions, our imaginations, our senses as well as from our thoughts.

When we sit in council, we practice listening with our hearts. Our primary goal is to feel what the person is saying, whether or not we understand it with our heads.

When it is our turn to speak, we practice brevity. The goal is not to offer an exhaustive account or a defensible explanation of how we got to be where we are, but rather to simply be there.

We practice spontaneity. We do not rehearse. It is difficult to listen with our hearts when we are busy rehearsing.

## Agreements:

The first agreement is to speak only when you are holding the talking piece. There are 3 exceptions:

1. If someone says something that resonates with you, produces a strong emotion, or is true of you as well, you simply express your feeling with the simple sound “ho”
2. If you literally did not hear what someone said, you may ask them to speak up or repeat themselves
3. The person who convenes the council may speak out of turn to gently resolve issues or offer gentle reminders of the agreements