

# Council Facilitator's Quick Sheet

## Preparation for Council

1. Choose a prompt that invites people to share their experience deeply with others, e.g. how do you work with.....how are you practicing with.....what arises around.....tell a story about... what has been your experience of and what have you learned about it (*choose something neutral that can be explored from all sides*)
2. Set up the physical circle *before* participants arrive.

## The Council

1. **Opening the Council** (*remain standing until everyone arrives*):
  - A. **Welcome everyone and introduce** yourself and the other facilitator.
  - B. **Sit in silence** for 3-5 minutes to settle.
  - C. **Initiate a check-in round** (*not necessary to use talking pieces*). Name and weather check or a word to describe what you are bringing to council...
  - D. **Introduce the purpose of Council** (*if there's a witness introduce and explain the role*)
  - E. **Introduce The Three Tenets**:
    1. *Not-Knowing*: giving up fixed ideas about ourselves and the universe,
    2. *Bearing Witness*: to the joy and suffering of the world, and
    3. *Taking Action*: that arises from Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness.
  - F. **Present the Seven Guidelines** for Council (*say a little about each from your own experience*)
    1. Listening from the Heart..... e.g. with your whole body, set aside judgment; look at the speaker
    2. Speaking from the Heart..... e.g. use "I" statements, speak from your own experience
    3. Speaking Leanly..... e.g., notice when you're rambling, look at the listeners
    4. Honoring Silence..... e.g., its ok to not share, or silently hold talking piece
    5. Speaking Spontaneously..... e.g., without planning what you will share
    6. Holding Confidentiality..... i.e., "What is said in the circle stays in the circle. After the Council is over, we may discuss with others themes and insights that arose, but without attribution to any party. No one is expected to speak both what s/he said in council after the council is over. If you want to further discuss something said in council with the person who said it, first ask permission of the person. People are free to say "No," and this response must be respected." We practice confidentiality to build mutual respect and trust in the Sangha. This intention is held after Council is over.

- 7. Using the Talking Piece..... i.e., introduce talking pieces and their purpose
- 8. Refraining from Crosstalk..... i.e., do not address others in the council nor reference someone else's sharing

G. **Invite someone to light the candle and offer the blessing;** “May we open our hearts and awaken our Bodhi mind.”

H. **Introduce the Prompt**, “seed the field” for discussion, speak to the topic at hand, unpack it a little, and offer a succinct prompt (5-minutes is good)

I. **State the style of council**, e.g., popcorn style, or we will go around the circle—followed by check-out.

4. **Know your role:** While in Council, the facilitator is both a Participant and Guardian:

- Attentive to the circle's energies and process
- Uses the bell to signal a pause, redirection, or circling back to the original intention.
- Takes their seat as facilitator, e.g., naming a shadow energy, “elephant in the room,” leaning into the skid, etc.

5. **Do the check-out round** 15-min before closing. (*make time for the witness(s) to speak*)

6. **Reaffirm the agreement of confidentiality:**

*"What is said in the circle stays in the circle. After the Council is over, we may discuss with others themes and insights that arose, but without attribution to any party. No one is expected to speak both what s/he said in council after the council is over. If you want to further discuss something said in council with the person who said it, first ask permission of the person. People are free to say "No," and this response must be respected."*

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7. **End with the Four Vows**, and then extinguish the candle.

8. **Put everything away**, and debrief with an approved Council facilitators as needed.