

Use of Council by Chapters

The Way of Council is fundamental to what we do as men in Illuman. It is a container of men designed to assist in listening and speaking from the heart. Council is a means for teaching us as a group and as individuals to live from our hearts as well as our heads at all times.

The core container is used in space dedicated as sacred and is made up of at least these elements:

- ❖ The 4 intentions:
 - Speak from the Heart
 - Listen from the Heart
 - Be lean of expression
 - Be spontaneous
- ❖ The last two intentions help us to accomplish the first two.
- ❖ Everything expressed in Council shall remain confidential.
- ❖ A Council group session shall have a clear beginning and a clear ending.
- ❖ The preferred group arrangement is a circle with a central focus point.
- ❖ A talking stick or other physical piece shall be held by one speaker at a time and indicates the authority to speak.
- ❖ There shall be no cross talk with or interrupting of a speaker.
- ❖ Be aware of the time allowed and the size of the group.
- ❖ Everyone participates as peers. No one is present to educate or advise others.
- ❖ A Council group session shall begin with an opportunity for dedicating the session.
- ❖ One person shall be designated as the facilitator. See Role of the Facilitator below.
- ❖ Men are encouraged to share with the intention of vulnerability, prayer, and a sacred offering.
- ❖ There shall be an expectation of confidentiality.

The preferred method of Council may also include other elements as have been modeled at Soularize in the past 2-3 years. These additional elements are more flexible and may be modified or adapted to fit different situations. However, when adapting or modifying Council, the container should remain “recognizable” in the form described above with the 4 intentions intact. Periodic review of the core elements is recommended. The value of council will depend on the strength of intention of the men making up the container. Chapters may request assistance with implementing the Way of Council.

The Role of the Facilitator

- ❖ To safeguard the integrity of the process.
- ❖ To hold the container.
- ❖ To establish and clarify the ground rules for Council.
- ❖ To “read” the “interactive field” and encourage the flow of group energy.
- ❖ To deflect any transference away from leaders and return it back to the circle.
- ❖ To assist the circle in clarifying its needs regarding goals and logistics, especially including confidentiality, time frames, breaks, ending etc.
- ❖ When necessary, to invite or input any “voice” or perspective that may be missing.
- ❖ When in doubt as to what to do next, to ask the group.

When to use the Way of Council

Council may be used in a group setting whenever the group is led to use it. There is no time when Council is inappropriate. Council is equally valuable as a means for conducting business as it is for exploring matters of the spirit. However, Council is not a task to be undertaken for its own sake. As Council teaches us to listen, speak, and live from our hearts, we are invited to carry the attitude of

Council with us as individuals at all times without the need for a container of men. Whenever we are in relationship with others, or even in relationship with ourselves, we are invited to live from the heart.

Council Formats:

Basic Council

The talking piece goes around the circle, clockwise; ideal for assuring that everyone who wants to may speak. Good for opening and closing group processes and for assessing the group “mind.” Often used when time is a constraint.

Web Council

The talking piece(s) are in the center. A participant picks up the talking piece when appropriate and speaks his/her truth. Afterward, the talking piece is returned to the center. Others are welcome to do the same.

Response Council

(1) The person holding the talking piece may empower a brief dialogue with others in the circle. Asking short answers to questions or during improvisational moments. This can be done without shuttling the talking piece back and forth.

(2) If there is time and space, a person might choose to do more extensive work or exploration by holding the talking piece and asking for input or response from as many people as desired (e.g., from one person to the entire circle).

Dyadic Council

Two people sit in council and pass the talking piece between them, working on an issue, exploring a vision, etc. One or two Witnesses may be present and offer their comments and perspectives, either during or at the end of the process as pre-arranged. If working in a group, as during relationship intensives, Witness Seat/s may be left open for people to enter intermittently. This form is good for connecting with the essence of the relationship, the “Third Presence,” the bigger picture.

Play Council

Form a circle. A ball is introduced and thrown to anyone across from the facilitator. The person who catches the ball is instructed to throw it to whomever he chooses and so on. The ball is thrown successively in this way to a new person in the circle until each person has received and thrown the ball. The group is asked to repeat the process (remembering who threw the ball to them and who they threw the ball to) several times. As they do this, various things will occur. After they seem to be doing okay with this process, introduce more balls into the circle.

Resources

The Way of Council, Jack Simmerman and Virginia Coyle.

The Center for Council: <http://www.centerforcouncil.org/>

The Ojai Foundation Center of Council Practice: <http://www.ojaifoundation.org/center-council>