

Creating an Evolutionary Learning Circle to support personal and social transformation.

Based on the model of the Resonant Core

A Resonant Core refers to a small group of people who practice relating to each other from a center or core of unconditional love and authenticity. Any small group that provides a safe space to relate to others from a feeling, heart place and encourages the full expression of intuitive knowing is a Resonant Core.

Evolutionary Learning Circles following this model co-create a shared environment that supports each member to actually apply and embody the principals of self and social evolution in their life, relationships, community and the world.

Before you begin

It is important that we set the initial conditions for the formation of a resonant core from a place of whole-centered consciousness. This allows the process to unfold from your Essential Self, rather than your separated mind.

Meditative Pause

Before creating a group or recommitting to an existing group it is important to drop into a deep inner stillness and connect with your Essential Self. Take time to answer the following questions, don't try to figure this out in your head, allow the answers to arise from within.

My purpose for participating in a Learning Circle is:

The characteristics of the people with whom I would feel most in resonance are:

Who comes to mind when I think of these qualities?

Write down these names and spend time bringing each of these people into your heart. If you are in a group already, notice if those members are on your list? Who else is there? Take a moment to connect in with each person on your list and invite their essence to join you in creating a Resonant Core. Notice what you feel as you connect with each person. Do this practice for several days, establishing a good energetic connection.

If you are starting a new group, then once you feel a resonant connection from the earlier practice, call each person on your list and share with them your intention to create a Resonant Core or Evolutionary Learning Circle for personal and social transformation. The ones who feel the same motivation will say yes to your invitation. Do not persuade. Allow for natural attraction to occur. If they are interested invite them to a meeting to find out more.

As groups evolve, if people are at cross-purposes the Resonant Core group will not be successful. Take the time to connect and find out what's true for each person. Forming a core group is a little like dating. Don't expect that the first group will necessarily be the right group for you, any more than your first date will be the right one for you to marry.

It usually takes a few meetings for a group to "gel" and bond. It is good to set a trial period at the conclusion of which members can state whether this feels like the right group for them. As we are beginning to practice the art of cocreation (leaping into the unknown) it is important that we do so in a group in which we feel a heart connection. We must be willing to be honest with ourselves and the group. Once we stabilize ourselves and have learned the art of creating and maintaining resonance, then we are better equipped to take our practice out into all other areas of our life.

If you do not have people immediately available to you in your area, continue to meditate, focusing on the qualities and purpose you listed above, inviting the right people to enter your life for this purpose. Become proactive and get involved with community, church or other activities that would be attended by people open to higher consciousness ideas. When you sense a connection with someone, share your vision of the work of a Resonating Core and the growth you hope to accomplish for yourself. In time, people will come into your experience and the group will begin. You may be surprised at how many people are feeling the same call as you are and are longing to join with others. All you need do is be willing to share your truth and invitation, then let go, trust, and pay attention to who shows up.

Is there an ideal size for a core group? In the *Co-creator's Handbook* they suggest that five people is the minimum for an effective resonating core. If you only have a few members, start with what you have and allow it to grow naturally. Eight to ten is a good size and still allows for intimate sharing.

Suggested Meeting Format

2-3 hours are good length for ongoing meetings, depending on the size and purpose of the group. Allow 3 hours for you initial meeting.

If you are hosting the meeting, create a sacred space and arrange the chairs or cushions in a circle. When we are sitting in a circle we are all equal, we are all participants and we are all leaders. In a circle we can see one another, eye to eye, heart to heart, essence to essence.

In a circle there is a sacred center that is created by the collective energy of the group. The center of the circle holds our collective essence or heart. Place a sacred object, a candle, create an alter, whatever feels right for your group to acknowledge this shared center. The person hosting the circle may create something, or you may have each person bring a special item to add to the space. There is much room for creativity, and simplicity works well.

Here are some simple guidelines you may want to follow that will assist in creating an environment of spiritual intimacy, safety and non judgement. Our core groups in Santa Barbara have been following this basic framework.

Start with a Centering or Attunement

Beginning a gathering with some form of centering is an important part of bringing your group together in resonance. Your minds may be focused on conversations with others that preceded the meeting, concerns about getting to the meeting place, or other challenges of the day. The purpose of centering is to reaffirm your connection to Source and with each other and to be fully present. Only by going beyond distractions and centering yourselves can you begin to access the unlimited resources of Spirit. Centering with others has a synergistic effect in bringing about your own sense of well-being and inner peace; you gain momentum and accelerate your own personal evolution.

An attunement can take the form of a brief silent group meditation, a guided visualization, or movement to music. The three major steps in the attunement are: first, to relax body, mind, and emotions; second, to focus your consciousness; and third, to allow time for silence and inner listening. (The *Co-creator's Handbook* has some great guided visualizations for this purpose)

Take time to notice the difference you feel before and after the attunement. How does the room feel? Notice the change in your connection with the rest of the group.

Do a Check-in

The check-in is another important group activity that brings your group into resonance. The purpose is to share with each other where you are physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually at that particular moment in time. Sharing how you are feeling honestly in the moment helps to bring you fully present to the circle, and lets others know how you are. Are you feeling great, tired, are you worried about your child, did you have a difficult day, are you feeling uncomfortable with the group, are you having a breakthrough in your personal practice. Speak and listen from your heart. Give the person who is speaking your complete attention.

The check-in may include some details about what has brought you to where you are at this particular moment but the purpose is **not** to tell stories. Generally, it is helpful to limit check-ins to two minutes or less. If you wish, use a timer to regulate the pace of sharing. For groups that are newly forming, allowing a longer time may be important so that you can get to know each other in a deeper way. If your group has been apart for a long time, more time may also be needed. If only a short time has elapsed since your group was last together, one word or sentence may be sufficient.

The Purpose of the Gathering

Having attuned and checked-in, you're ready to attend to the purpose that is bringing you together. This is when you will take time to share about what you have read and your experience of the material in your life. If this is your first meeting you would want to discuss the book you will be studying together if it has already been chosen, or use this first meeting to choose the book from a list of options. Once the book is chosen you would want to agree on how you will move through the book together.

When will you meet, how often and for how long?

How many chapters would you read prior to each meeting?

And any other logistics, so everyone is clear and feels good about the process.

The main content of your meeting may also include physical or mental exercises, processes, visualizations, or discussions to deepen your understanding of the material and your connection to one another. For the first several meetings you may give extra time to getting to know each other more intimately. You may share about your spiritual journeys, your personal practice, what you need support on from the group. The main objective is to create group resonance thus creating a space for the Essential Self in each person to come into form. (The *Cocreator's Handbook* offers many exercises and practices for your circle gatherings.)

Breaks

Be sure to schedule a break during your meeting for people to stretch, take care of business and casually connect. You may choose to have light refreshments to nourish the body. Taking care of ourselves and giving space to process are important to creating and maintaining group resonance.

The Closing

Another important element of co-creative gatherings is the closing practice, prayer, meditation or ceremony. Each group develops closings that are meaningful for them. The purpose of the closing is to reaffirm your connections and to hold and maintain the field of your group until you come together again.

I enjoy doing an appreciation circle before the closing mediation or ceremony. In the appreciation circle we share what we most appreciated about the circle. This brings our the focus of our attention to what is positive and loving about each other and it is honoring to the work we are doing together.

Shared Leadership

We have found that it valuable and fun to rotate the leadership and facilitation of the meetings. We learn so much from one another's creativity and understanding. We suggest that two people volunteer to facilitate each one of the meetings. This will give everyone a chance to cocreate with another person on behalf of the whole group.

As the host for an evening you would be responsible for the opening attunement, content and flow of the meeting and the closing. For the content section, you would perhaps choose some guiding questions and or practices to stimulate that week's discussion. For the opening and closing, you might choose music, or a meditation or movement piece.

We also recommend that some field work be created to do between meetings. This field work would be something that incorporates the ideas being discussed into application or experience in our lives. Be creative. Keep it simple. The next time you meet take time to share about the field work from the previous session before moving on.

Before the close you would want to ask for the next two volunteers to come forward for the next meeting.

Conscious Communication

Accessing the voice of the Essential Self

There are three general modes of communicating that we recommend for a Resonant Core to support bringing forth the authentic voice of each person. The first is silence, the second is a council style sharing using a talking stick, the third is an open dialog format that allows the free flow of inspired insights.

Silence- Silence is the best primer for all other modes of communication in a Resonant Core. Since it is our goal to access our higher wisdom, we offer the topic to be discussed into the collective energy at the center of the circle. We drop into silence, emptying our minds and putting our attention on our Essential Self. We connect heart to heart around the circle, opening to access the shared wisdom of the group mind. In this place we ask our question or state the topic we wish to discuss and open to the wisdom of our Essential Self.

Using a talking stick - To facilitate heartfelt uninterrupted discussions during a gathering, you may choose to use the model of the Native American “talking stick” to allow each person to fully share uninterrupted in the group. Using a talking stick often raises our awareness of how customary it is for us to interrupt each other, consciously or unconsciously overpowering each others words, The talking stick cultivates a practice of deep listening and reminds us that our words are sacred and that each person in the group has something important to contribute to the whole. The “talking stick” slows us down, and allows deeper wisdom to come through.

Taking a moment to pause and be silent between each persons sharing can assist us in staying present and connected to our essence.

Select a sacred object that can be passed around the circle or placed in the middle to be picked up when the next person is ready to speak. It can be an object from nature or some other object that has special meaning to you.

Open Dialog -With open dialog we start with the deep centering and connecting heart to heart, just as we did for the council, then we open to a more fluid dialog. In open dialog, we pick up on what others are saying, react, interact, brainstorm, agree and disagree and interject new ideas, thoughts and opinions. The energy of open dialog stimulates the free flow of ideas. We listen intentionally to what others are saying and we speak spontaneously when the words come. If things get to wild and it appears no one is really listening to the other, (which often happens in open dialog) call for a moment of silence, taking a moment to center yourself and reconnect before you continue. With practice this kind of dialog becomes like a dance.

All of these practices are effective means for gaining access to our deeper knowing. When we collectively practice deep listening, and commit to speaking from the heart, we gain access to a higher frequency of knowing. A dynamic of synergy, synchronicity, and, sometimes, telepathy is experienced, giving birth to our collective wisdom.

Setting Clear Agreements

Clear agreements are important when are practicing new ways of being together. The **Co-creators Agreements** as laid out in the *Co-creator's Handbook* is a great tool to assist in creating a set of agreements that support the Resonant Core process. The Santa Barbara community cores have adopted these agreements, (with each group adding or modifying them to better served their particular group) and referred to them often when they were first starting, and continue to return to them whenever a challenge arises in the group. You may want to consider using them as a starting point for your group process.

Suggestions for using the Co-creators Agreements

In your first meeting, have each person read one agreement aloud and continue around the circle until all have been read. Feeling each one and imagining it being a part of your shared commitment for relating as a group. Have each member take a copy of the agreements home, taking time to meditate and think about them and whether they feel right for themselves personally and for the group. At a subsequent meeting you could discuss each one after it was read, exploring what they mean to you, removing, changing or adding any that feel right for your group. Once you have a set of agreements that everyone feels good about, you can print them up and have each person in the group make a commitment to following them. These agreements become the basis for self-governance. It is important that you review the agreements periodically to be sure they still align with the group heart and are supportive of your shared purpose.

The Co-Creator's Agreements

Be Mindful

My intent is to be myself, to be authentic, and to be fully present.

Realize our Potential

My commitment is to realize my full potential and support others in doing the same.

Follow my Guidance

I agree to attune with Spirit and follow the calling of my soul on behalf of the well-being of the whole.

Communicate with Integrity

I agree to tell my truth with compassion for myself and others.

Act with Integrity

I agree to keep my agreements and will do my best to follow my heart in making commitments.

Deep Listening

I agree to listen respectfully to the communication of others and tune into their deepest meaning.

Honor One Another

I agree to honor each person's process, acknowledging that everyone, including myself, is making the best possible choice or decision we are capable of in that moment.

Appreciate Our Contributions

I agree to take responsibility for asking for and receiving acknowledgments and for acknowledging others.

Honor Our Differences

I agree to come from a sense of cooperation and caring in my interactions with others, and from an understanding that objectives are often the same even though methods for achieving them may differ. I honor the diversity of all life.

Take Responsibility

I agree to take responsibility for my creations, my reactions, my experience and my relationships.

Maintain Resonance

I agree to take the time to establish rapport and then to re-connect with anyone with whom I feel out of harmony as soon as it may be appropriate.

Resolve Problems Constructively

I agree to take problems, complaints and upsets to the person(s) with whom I can resolve them, at the earliest opportunity. I agree not to criticize or complain to someone who cannot do something about my complaint, and I will redirect others to do the same.

Go for Excellence

I agree to support others and to be supported in participating at the highest level of excellence.

Learn from Experience

I agree to do my best to learn from my experiences.

Accept Imperfections

I intend to embrace and accept the imperfections of myself and others.

Be a Leader

I agree to foster an environment of genuine collaboration in which all people, including myself, feel empowered to express our individual and collective potential.

Service to Others

I am willing to open my heart, still my mind and be in compassionate service to all life.

Re-evaluate My Commitment

I agree to choose and re-choose to participate in this Core Group. It is my choice.

Lighten UP!

I agree to create joy in my relationships, my work and my life.

These Agreements have been adapted from The Geneva Group Agreements, Boulder, CO 1985.

All of these guidelines are suggestions to assist you in getting started. The *Co-Creators Handbook* offers many additional practices, processes, and meditations etc. that assist in creating and maintaining group resonance. We highly recommend that your group purchase at least one book as a resource.

To purchase this book visit the **EVOLVE** Store or the Global Family Website at www.globalfamily.net.

Another great resource is the members of your group who have had experience in a circle of some kind. Find out what you collectively know, what things really worked, what things didn't?

Start where you are at, get the information you need to help you get started and stretch past what you know. And always remember that the best guide is your own Essential Self. Once you have established group resonance, let the wisdom of the group guide you to a way of relating that is a **QUANTUM JUMP** from where you are now.

Have Fun!