

MIDWIFING ONLINE COMMUNITY

Creating successful environments for interaction online is not substantially different from any other such endeavor we might undertake; it draws on the same elements for 'success' that convening an in-person gathering does – intention, invitation, building the container, welcome, agreement and conscious modeling. Here are some of my thoughts on what these elements are, and how they are specifically invoked when working within an electronic environment:



intention

- get clear on your intention
 - what is your commitment? (personal and organizational)
 - time/money/psychic support
 - what are your reasons for opening the space?
 - who is this space for?
 - what purpose/s will it serve?
 - What is the lifespan of the group? (indefinite? specific?)

purpose

- articulate the specific purpose for your endeavor and imbue each of the elements in your purpose with as much consciousness as possible
- dedicate the work to a higher good – for the benefit of all

invitation

- articulate a clear 'call' addressed to those who would hear it, clearly communicating the essential intent & purpose of your offering

creating a container

- *holding the perimeter*

- a core team who can ‘hold the space’ for what is in the center to emerge
 - this position calls for attention, and a delicate sense of listening/timing – when to speak, when to stay silent
- *inclusivity*
 - affirm that the right people are here & those who are here are the ‘right’ ones
 - every voice has some part of the puzzle to contribute
 - know that every voice is worthy of attention and respect
- *recognize the potential pitfalls of the medium*
 - no body language or clues can make it difficult to ‘listen’ deeply to each other
 - words expressed without those clues can feel harsh or be misunderstood
- *safety*
 - get agreement on confidentiality or whatever it takes to achieve safety and trust within the group. You may need to explore this with the group, rather than assuming you know what safety means to everyone
- *self-responsibility*
 - encourage people to focus on their own experience
 - no ‘attacks’
 - don’t conflate people with their ideas – leave room for each other to change and adapt
 - participate – each of us creates the container together

welcome

- acknowledge the group and its intent
- acknowledge and affirm each member as they venture out into expression
- acknowledge and affirm presence, even if it is silent
 - silence can be framed and experienced positively, as a “listening into being”

ground rules

- articulate the elements necessary for holding the container
- ask for & contribute to unity & self-responsibility in holding to articulated 'ground rules'

seeding the ground

- create a core of 'active' listeners/planters
 - listen for your own ideas/responses
 - share them – model a new way of 'being' online

nurturing, or “watering” the seeds

- encourage and reward participation from others
- continue to model participation with your own interaction & ideas