

Council of Wisdom

- How to facilitate the Process

A process for:

- getting and giving support and advise as a community,
- respecting and re-awakening the archetypal energies of the community elder and the counsellor
- and rediscovering our inner sovereign

I write this in my personal capacity as a contribution and response to the Muizenberg Can Emotional Support aspect during the COVID lockdown March – June 2020. It is part two in a series, the first of which can be read here: [My Story is Our Story](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO THE ANCESTORS

Also known as KING'S COURT, in the men's work circles where I first encountered this process (2007-present), I re-write this as a gender-neutral process, having scoured the internet for any sign of an open source guide. Much respect to the Mankind Project (MKP), and although I believe MKP manuals are copyrighted, I believe this archetypal structure of wisdom, advice, counsel and feedback to be ancient and of universal heritage. I thus take liberty to re-write a version of this process for these difficult times. Inverted commas come from an uncredited document I received and saved somewhere over the years.

ANCIENT WAYS OF LEADERSHIP

Any good leader has always been as strong and as wise as their counsellors and advisors. Each of us holds king or queen (regent) energy in our individual lives, perhaps not overtly in our family or community setting, but each of us ultimately has the power to make decisions for the good of our own internal realm, our inner kingdom, and outwardly our life. It is our right and our responsibility to discover and activate this personal power, if we feel we don't have it at present. But even when we do, we still need support from others.

SETTING THE CONTAINER

Our modern world has stripped us of a culture that effortlessly allows for wise counsel to be given to us by our elders, or even peers. We have no old men and women sitting under trees telling stories to the youth and giving counsel to the temporarily lost or confused. Perhaps it is just that they now sit under bridges and few are willing to listen to them, for often I do wonder if the wisest amongst us are the homeless, and the law keeps

them away from the trees, parks, forests. No doubt that is a long and philosophical and complex discussion.

RECREATING CULTURE

Because of this loss, it is imperative that we set about re-creating pockets of culture that are flexible and adaptable. Despite the connectivity, over-population and high density cityscapes of our modern world, so many of us feel alone, lonely or devoid of good mentorship, or even just good advice when we need it. Personally I have found wisdom and advice in the most unlikely and abundant of places, but one needs to have finely tuned senses and gift of balanced interpretation. Perhaps my thwasa training or meditation retreats have gifted me, but despite that, I regularly benefit and am deeply grateful for receiving guidance, or even just caring ears, from my peers, and elders.

SETTING THE CONTAINER

You need to have a small group or community of people who are united in their desire to receive and give support to each other. Any good container (a space that holds and supports what happens inside it) generally needs a few universal principles to keep it safe and nurturing. Qualities that build **trust and a sense of safety** for the participants like:

- honesty and transparency
- confidentiality
- non-judgment (compassion)
- listening and patience
- respect for each other and the process guidelines
- accountability and taking responsibility

It's hard to always be perfect, and mistakes are part of the process, but at least those form part of a conscious intention. There are process to support each of those, but this is not re-creating the wheel ([The Mankind Project](#) for men and [Women for Afrika](#) for women are two organisations I can recommend for anyone wanting to explore this work further)

THE PROCESS

Once you have your group and created your container of time, place, setting, intentions, values and guidelines, a brief introduction by the facilitator can be followed by this process:

Each person present checks in with feelings/emotions to ground themselves in the space. Depending on the time and number of people, either the time is divided equally between everyone, or people also state in their check-in if they are here to support/advise, or receive support/guidance/advise, or both. I have always found that I gain much from supporting others, their problems often resonate or echo with an issue in my life, as does the wisdom and advice that is given to them, sometimes my own advice to them, is just what I need to follow in my life, and just what I needed to hear.

ZOOM SESSION SETUP

Usually we would “re-form the circle into the shape of a horseshoe. Place an empty chair at the open end of the horseshoe”. That is the Regent’s Throne, or the Sovereign’s Seat, whatever you want to call it, even just the **Hotseat!** The person requesting the Counsel takes the empty seat with their Court (everyone else) sitting in the horseshoe. Now in a Zoom session, this would just need to be held according to those parameters, such as listeners keeping their mics muted at first, and using speaker view.

EXPLAINING THE ISSUE

The person spends approximately 5-7 minutes talking about a particular issue in their life that is challenging them at the moment and where they appears to be struggling, or have few options that they can see. This person needs to “ be clear, direct, concise and rigorously truthful”.

LISTENING TO THE ISSUE

The Court practices “**Warrior Communication and Listening to Understand, with the understanding that they have permission to point out options, alternatives, and other considerations without having to fix the problem**” for the person.

REPEAT: This is not to pass judgment, or solve the problem, it’s to give feedback and reflections, potential other angles or suggestions to consider!

REQUESTING FEEDBACK:

The King/Queen will then ask each person in the Court, one at a time “What do you think?” or the facilitator, just delegates each person a chance to respond, and they may decline if nothing to say. Bear in mind that time is limited according to the group agreement and the number of people, so there may be just one minute per person giving feedback.

GIVING FEEDBACK

The facilitator can re-iterate this for people/counsellors, while people are still new to the process: “Each person will answer again clearly, concisely with his feedback for the Queen/King. Be honest, but with compassion, and without judgement. No fixing, or rescuing, just advise that feels true from your heart in that moment.

The person may have follow up questions for their advisor to seek more clarity, though remembering that this is not a discussion (unless time allows – the facilitator needs to be strict with this).

After each and every advisor has spoken, the Queen/King can give thanks, and absorb the feedback they have received.

FACILITATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Reminding everyone of the group agreements and guidelines for the container at the beginning and whenever needed.
 - Ensure that there is enough time for everyone who needed counsel, to receive it, and that everyone gets a chance to give feedback. So be strict with time, and stop people if they are explaining anything other than their exact issue, or their exact advise.
 - Nothing needs to be perfect, especially in the beginning. The process can be repeated many times and people will get the hang for it over time. But time and guideline boundaries must be respected by everyone, or the safety and sustainability of the container becomes threatened.
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CLOSING THE CIRCLE / CONTAINER

When everyone has had their turn or the agreed time has been reached, there should be time left for a check-out, where each person again shares their name, their feelings at that moment, and perhaps a short reflection of their experience, in a word or a short sentence or longer (time depending).

If no final points of admin, or urgent needs, the facilitator can thank everyone and end the gathering.

I very much hope this brings great support, comfort and advise to you and your group, family, community!

Camagu! Give Thanks!
Craig Makhosi

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Or follow: https://www.instagram.com/the_savage_craig/

Craig grew up in Cape Town and after training temporarily as a Sangoma in the early 2000's, went on to found UBuntu Bridge, a social entrepreneurship building cultural, linguistic and spiritual bridges, primarily through teaching Xhosa. Besides running the organisation, and volunteering in men's work circles, he produces edutaining content to inspire and empower people relating to living as more conscious, harmonious, healthy and happy beings.