

ARTICLE: MCA SEASONED COACHES CIRCLE

Singing Stones and Shared Wisdom by Lynn Baskfield

The MCA Seasoned Coaches Circle met for the second time on a cool April afternoon in Matthew Rochte's inviting south Minneapolis living room. The purpose of the circle: to get at what well-established coaches, those who have been active in the profession five years or more--are thinking.

Conversation circles are ancient. Native American tribes called them councils and passed a talking stick from person to person. Only the person holding the stick spoke. The others listened. In this way, what was said was held in the center, which in Native American tradition is the heart. Egos and arguments took a back seat as each person listened to what the others had to say. The quieter people had opportunity to speak, and the talkers learned about the power of listening. Controversial issues had room to be fully examined, and there was access to solutions that may not have been apparent when there were only two points of view being debated.

In the Seasoned Coaches Circle, our talking object was a singing stone made by a Native American artist. Shaped something like a hollow egg, when held in the hand and shaken or moved with the natural gestures of talking, the stones inside made soothing sounds.

The principles of the conversation circle are simple: listen, stay curious and suspend certainty, create and hold the space for difference, slow the conversation down, and speak from your own experience.

The circle opens with a question. Those attending are encouraged to bring their own questions—and to let questions arise from the conversation. In this way the conversation deepens. One question that kicked off the April Seasoned Coaches Circle came from a Rilke poem about the way a swan waddles awkwardly on land, then glides effortlessly into the water. What in that poem did we resonate with? The other question pertained to the busy signal you used to get when the phone line was in use or off the hook. What is it to be out of reach? What happens when we can't reach someone else? Where is the down time and what good would it be if we had it?

The conversation wove threads of where we are personally with strands of where we are professionally. Our questions started at the center of our lives and radiated out into the world. We ended the circle exploring questions of what coaching is now, what future of coaching will be, and what our roles are in the community and the world.

I left feeling like the circle had become a great cauldron of soup simmering on the fire of our collective stories, thinking and experience. I left nourished and full. I realized later I had taken the "phone off the hook" for a couple of hours, and in doing so I tapped into a deep wellspring of wisdom.

Lynn Baskfield has been a professional coach for 8 years, now specializing in coaching with the assistance of horses. Her company is SpiritDance, Equine Assisted Learning and Education. 612-823-7022. lynn@equinecoaching.com www.equinecoaching.com

Want more Information?

If you are a seasoned coach, and would like to be part of these circles, contact Matthew Rochte at 612-332-1642, matthew@seasonedcoachescircles.com

Also check out <http://www.seasonedcoachescircles.com>

Next meeting will be May 19th