

GROUP GUIDELINES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The guidelines below can help us to have deep, effective dialogues about important, but sometimes challenging topics. Please do your best to embody these agreements and be expected throughout our conversation to be held accountable to them.

Also, please keep in mind that dynamics of power and privilege play heavily into the way people interact with one another in any situation. It is important to explore whether your privilege/power is negatively impacting your ability to effectively follow these guidelines. It is also important to understand that continued oppression/marginalization may impact a person's ability to follow or find credibility in these guidelines.

KNOW YOUR INTENT, OWN YOUR IMPACT

You may perceive your intent as harmless; however, the impact of your words/ actions can be hurtful, damaging or triggering. Be open to hearing the impact of your words and/or actions.

NO ONE KNOWS EVERYTHING; TOGETHER WE KNOW A LOT

This means we all get practice being humble, because we have something to learn from everyone in the room—even if we have a great deal of experience in a particular area. It also means we all have a responsibility to share what we know, as well as our questions, so that others may learn from us.

ASSUME NOTHING

If you think you might be misunderstanding something, ask questions respectfully. Be open to learning and growing in these conversations. Also, let go of any assumptions you may hold in order to make room for the possibility that you do not know the full picture.

BE CURIOUS

We make better decisions when we approach our problems and challenges with questions (“What if we...?”) and curiosity. Allow space for play, curiosity, and creativity.

RECOGNIZE THE IMPACT OF YOUR LEARNING ON PEOPLE WITH MARGINALIZED IDENTITIES

Recognize and honor that unbridled curiosity and inquiries can be burdensome to people of color and those with a variety of marginalized identities who, in addition to processing oppressive dynamics, also take on the “teacher” role, providing explanations and context for folks. People of color and folks with other marginalized identities have the right to not answer your questions.

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH/ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE

Be willing to be vulnerable, honest, and open with your thoughts. Be aware of “silenced dialogue,” where people may not speak up because they feel their experiences are undervalued, underappreciated, invalidated etc. Create space for others to speak.

WE CAN'T BE WORDSMITHS ALL OF THE TIME

As much as we'd like, we just can't. Often, people feel hesitant to participate in a workshop or meeting for fear of “messaging up” or stumbling over their words. Additionally, it can sometimes be difficult to explain an oppressive dynamic with words—it can be a visceral feeling that is hard to describe, or so complex that words don't do it justice. We want everyone to feel comfortable participating. We value what you have to say, even if it may not be as clear as you like.

LISTEN FOR UNDERSTANDING

Sometimes the best action we can take is deeply and actively listening. Listening deeply to folks who choose to be vulnerable is sometimes the best way to show support and contribute to the conversation.

ONE VOICE, ONE MIC

Please, one person speak at a time. Leave space between speakers for those who need more time to process words, or are less comfortable fighting for airtime in a conversation.

MOVE UP, MOVE UP

If you're someone who tends not to speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more. If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more.

STAY ENGAGED

Make a personal commitment to remain emotionally, intellectually and socially involved in the dialogue and the space.

EXPERIENCE DISCOMFORT

Open and truthful conversations about race, gender, sexuality etc. can be uncomfortable at times. Try sitting with that discomfort and get curious about what that discomfort is trying to tell you. Do you need some support in understanding a certain topic? Are you defending your power or privilege? Are you feeling vulnerable in your marginalized identity?

BE AWARE OF TIME

This is helpful for your facilitator and helps to respect everyone's time and commitment. Please come back from breaks on time, and refrain from speaking in long monologues.

EXPECT NON-CLOSURE

You may not find closure at the end of our time together and that is ok. Sit with it and continue to do your own self-work, or reach out to others for additional support.

WHAT'S SAID HERE, STAYS HERE. WHAT'S LEARNED HERE, LEAVES HERE

In order to maintain a space where people feel comfortable sharing experiences, personal stories are shared in confidence and should remain in confidence. In the spirit of continued growth, the hope is that everyone will embody the lessons gleaned from what is learned through sharing, and that each person uses that new learning to impact their attitudes and actions--while also sharing those lessons (not the stories) with others.

GUIDELINES ADAPTED BY CITYWILD FROM:

Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools

By Glen Singleton and Curtis Linton

Diversity and Inclusion Handbook for Outdoor Educators

By Monserrat Alvarez

Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance

www.aortacollective.org

And many other incredible anti-oppression leaders and facilitators.