



Guidelines for Dialogue

(Adapted from The Program on Intergroup Relations, University of Michigan)

Guidelines or group agreements are used to establish expectations for how the group will engage in the space and can be used as an accountability check-in when behaviors in the space starts to stray from agreed upon norms.

1. Confidentiality

- a. What is said here, stays here; what is learned here, leaves here.

2. Use “I” Statements

- a. Speak from your experiences.
- b. Each person is an expert of their own experiences.

3. Make space, take space

- a. Share airtime and monitor how much you have been talking. Reflect on how you are engaging-- be aware if you are taking up much more space than others. If you are taking up less than others, empower yourself to speak up.

4. Expect and accept a lack of closure

- a. The dialogue space is intended to be a starting place-- to start a conversation, to reflect, to challenge some of our assumptions, to grow and think in ways we may not usually.
- b. It is not a space to “fix” everything or come away with all of the solutions. Instead, this space is meant to be a catalyst from which you continue to think, reflect and build upon after the dialogue ends.

5. We will trust that people are always doing the best they can.

- a. This is a space for learning and growing. It is okay to make mistakes; when mistakes happen, acknowledge, apologize and move on.
- b. Don't freeze people in time. Stay open to the idea that people are able to grow and change and your understanding of others should remain malleable.

6. Challenge the idea, not the person.

- a. It's okay to disagree. Focus on the ideas expressed and any underlying assumptions, the dynamics of power and oppression and values reflected in statements by asking questions. Avoid personal attacks and judgment.
- b. We will not demean, devalue, or “put down” people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.

7. Our primary commitment is to learn from each other.

- a. We will listen to each other and not talk at each other.
- b. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values.
- c. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.

Note: This list is a suggestion of commonly used guidelines but does not encompass every option.

