

Group Agreements (activity)

Our teachers: We have adapted this activity from the School Reform Initiative²³ and the work of adrienne maree brown.²⁴

Time: 30 minutes

What it's good for: When group agreements are established and made transparent, we can commit to collective responsibility for welcoming each other into dialogue and action.

How it works: Break into small groups of 3–5 and have each group focus on one of the four general agreements below.

1. Show up (or choose to be present).
Ask yourself: W.A.I.T. (Why Am I Talking?) and W.A.I.N.T. (Why Am I Not Talking?)

Make Space, Take Space

We all come with relative societal privileges and oppressions based, in part, on our experience with race, gender, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, health, citizenship-status, etc. Let's be aware of how this affects what we say and how we act.

2. Pay attention (to heart and meaning).
Listen from the inside out, or listen from the bottom up (a feeling in your gut matters).

23 School Reform Initiative, Community Agreements, accessed August 2017, http://schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/community_agreements.pdf

24 adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategies*, (Oakland, CA: A.K. Press, 2017), p. 230.

Be open to learning

Self care and community care—pay attention to your bladder, pay attention to your neighbors.

3. Tell the truth (without blame or judgment).

Be open to someone else speaking your truth

Engage tension, don't indulge drama

Confidentiality — take the lessons, leave the details

4. Be open to outcome (not attached to outcome).

Assume best intent, attend to impact

Value process as much as, if not more than, you value the outcomes

For their general agreement (i.e., “show up”) ask the group to modify or add to the agreement, and then give examples of what that agreement looks like in practice.

Have each group present their modified agreements and examples to the whole group. Take time after each proposal to see if anyone has strong objections or if you are in general agreement. Write the new agreements in a place that everyone can see and has access to, and return to it throughout the semester or the time you are together.

MAKING & BEING