

Tool C: Community Agreements for Productive Conversations on Race



Expect and Presume Welcome/Establish Brave Space

In difficult conversations our learning often comes through our own discomfort and risk taking. By avoiding conflict or keeping others “comfortable” you may miss the opportunity to authentically engage with others or further your own understanding. However, we also recognize that sometimes our words create harm despite our best intentions. We acknowledge we are here to learn in community with one another. By centering our work on our shared goals and values and approaching conversations with respect and generosity we will further our shared learning.

Move Up, Move Up

If you are someone who tends to not 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. If you are facilitating, this is an opportunity to notice and acknowledge power dynamics in the room – who is talking first? Who is holding power because of their role (like the facilitator), status, or identity? Who is disengaging or observing instead of actively participating?

Respect and Honor Silence and Confidentiality

This is not “share or die,” but what is shared should remain confidential within the group.

Be Present

Engage in active listening and be aware of your thoughts and feelings in the moment. What do you need to stay present and engaged? Limit technology and distractions to only that which furthers your learning.

Speak Your Truth and Let Others Speak Theirs

Different perspectives are welcome and encouraged. Speak from your own lived experience and not from experience that you do not personally have. Your normal may not be my normal.

No One Knows Everything; Together We Know a Lot

Shared learning is a practice in humility, because we have something to learn from everyone in the room. 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.

No Fixing, No Saving

We are here to do our own work and to be in community with one another. Listen deeply and allow others to experience their own discomfort, which may further their own learning. If you find yourself wanting to “fix” a situation or alleviate someone else’s (or your own) discomfort, take a moment to reflect on what is coming up for you.

When Your Mind Starts to Judge, Instead Turn to Wonder

Approach problems and challenges from a place of curiosity and creative thinking rather from a point of frustration or judgment. This includes staying open to feedback and inquiry that others may offer you.

We Are Human, Not Perfect (We Can’t Be Articulate All of the Time)

As much as we’d like to be, we are human and therefore imperfect. We can’t always be articulate. Often people feel hesitant to participate for fear of “messing up” or stumbling over their words. We encourage everyone to participate, even if you can’t get it right all the time.

Expect and Accept Non-Closure

We want to solve problems and resolve conflict, but this is lifelong work. Many racial justice conversations focus on awareness raising and the development of our own racial justice competence, not necessarily the transformation of others. Sometimes you may have to revisit conversations to reconcile differences and in other cases things will go left unsaid, unfinished.

Acknowledgments

Aorta: http://aorta.coop/portfolio_page/tips-and-tools-for-addressing-systemic-power/

Cultures Connecting: <http://culturesconnecting.com/products/>

Fleur Larsen Facilitation: <http://www.fleurlarsenfacilitation.com>