Sample Group Agreements

(From the Spark*ED Creating Positive Learning Spaces training session)

Group Agreements are one of the tools we have to collectively set intentions of how people wish to treat each other, communicate with each other, share space together, and often how the group wants to work collaboratively toward a common goal.

Establishing group agreements supports creating a safe place to learn. This can deepen everyone's understanding of what makes someone feel welcome and safe (physically and emotionally). It promotes joint accountability, helps negotiate challenges that occur, highlights expectations for behavior, and reduce overall conflict. These agreements can be referred back to throughout the lesson to affirm positive behavior and call folks back into group norms. Agreements need to allow space for the mistakes that are part of learning, and also guide learners to take responsibility for any negative impacts their missteps may have.

Topic	Agreement	Explanation
Respect	**Respect**	We may have different values, beliefs, or perspectives on any given topic. It is important that we are respectful of other participants.
	Don't yuck my yum	We all have different likes and dislikes & interests in this group and this is ok!
	All are welcome here **All of you is welcome here**	Being respectful includes using language that is free of homophobic, sexist, or racist comments. It means we will strive to treat each other with courtesy and basic kindness even though we may be different or if we disagree.
	Invisible Suitcase	It holds our experiences, identities, knowledge, and other things about us that someone wouldn't necessarily know by looking at us. We don't know what others have been through or are going through when we discuss topics.
	The Platinum Rule	The alternative to the Golden Rule. This could include paying attention to someone's gender pronouns, honoring that they may not want to talk about something, or that they would like a warning before discussing some types of content.

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Self-Care	**Yes to Self-Care!**	People have full permission to get up, stretch, use the bathroom, take a break, step-out for a moment, breathe, ask for help or clarification, move their body and express their needs…
Confidentiality	**What is said here stays here. What is learned here stays with you**	What is shared in the group will remain in this group. If talking with someone else about what has occurred, refrain from using any description that would identify someone in the group. Confidentiality is important! At the same time, participants should take what is learned about the topic and use it.
Learning	**Be curious**	Ask questions. And if you have a question that feels off topic or comes to you at an inopportune moment, just write it down and we'll try to address it at some point in our time together.
	Work in your Growth Zone	We all have a Comfort, Growth, and Panic Zone. Learning doesn't happen if we are terrified (panic zone) or if we feel we are not being challenged (comfort zone). Growth occurs between these two places. Small risks can help us continue to grow!
	Unlearning is as important as learning	Unlearning is the process of discarding something from memory. When someone unlearns something, they forget it or put it aside, Unlearning get be used to set aside bad habits, preconceptions or false information.

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Group Participation	**2B4 Me** **Move Up/Move Back** **Take Space/Make Space**	Everyone participates in different ways. Some people participate actively and are often the first to respond to a question or to share something. Others need to take a – pause to consider a question or their thoughts. If you are someone who tends to be in the first category, it is helpful to allow for two other participants to speak before you do – "two before me." This helps share the discussion space more equitably among participants. You may have also heard this referred to as "move up/move back" or "take space/make space."
	ELMO (Enough, Let's Move On)	ELMO recognizes a person's issue but keeps things moving, allows the group to get back on track, and may help group members not mentally check out.
	One Mic	Often in group process, especially with lots of people, it can be challenging to hear when more than one person is talking at the same time. 'One mic' is used to focus attention on one speaker.
	Use "I" Statements **Speak your own truth**	Use 'I statements' in group process to speak from our own perspective, not from someone else's. When you speak YOUR truth, it comes directly from your own feelings, thoughts, and experience.
	Culture of Consent	Check in, listen, and ask; especially around touch!
	The Moon Rule	I can talk about the moon though I have not been there. I can talk about something, (like sex or getting a test or visiting a health center) but it does not mean I have personally experienced this!

Making Mistakes	**Assume good intentions & acknowledge impact***.	Having "assume good will" or "the best intentions" is a common group agreement. Mistakes and missteps are part of learning. At the same time, if a participant has a negative reaction to something someone else has shared, including the facilitator, this group agreement can be seen as silencing the participant who has had the negative reaction. So, we would finish "assume good intent" with "but recognize that impact is more important than intention." This is to avoid causing additional harm to the participant who has had the negative reaction. If someone say something that comes out wrong or is offensive, it is their responsibility – even if they didn't meant it – to acknowledge any negative impacts people experienced, and to be accountable for doing better moving forward. Considering impact over intent means that we don't defend our actions but respond and listen to the person we may have impacted negatively.
	Ouch/Oops	Anyone should feel they can express having a negative reaction or response to either the content or something the facilitator or a participant has said ("Ouch"). Doing so gives the opportunity for the person to apologize for what was said ("Oops"), and for discussion and additional learning.
	Call In vs. Call Out	Rather than ostracizing someone for what they have said, encourage this person to "come back in" to the agreed upon behavior. This is a practice of kindness and inclusion rather than one of competition and exclusion
	Right to pass	Everyone has the right to pass, not share, or participate in ways that best match their needs.