

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Five Guiding Principles:

1. Equality
2. Trust
3. Safety
4. Openness
5. Courage

Equality means that each person has an equal opportunity to share, and that all voices are represented in the conversation. If you are an extrovert, allow others to speak first. If you are an introvert, be mindful to speak up. Invite others into the conversation, while also providing the option to pass. Be comfortable with silence; it provides time to think and process.

Trust assumes positive intentions and common goals for all members of the group. Everyone wants to do right by everyone else, and all group members have the common goal of helping one another grow in their understanding. Trust also assumes confidentiality. Personal information shared in the group stays in the group.

Safety means that while everyone is encouraged to take healthy risks, every person's "risk" looks different. Each person gets to decide what to share and when without coercion. For example, someone might talk about how a situation made him or her feel, without naming the situation or the people involved. Safety also means that each individual is in charge of their own process; they get to choose what to take and what to leave behind from a discussion. The facilitator is not the "expert" of your experience—you are.

Openness requires every group member to listen, seeking to understand and empathize. Each individual in the community is open to changing and expanding their perceptions, challenging their beliefs, and trying and learning something new.

Courage is the willingness to stay with uncomfortable emotions for the sake of growth. Each group member will value their own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others, understanding that it is in this space that both common humanity and authenticity can be cultivated.