Space Setting Practices

Why is it important to 'Set a Space'? It is a facilitator's responsibility to foster the creation of an environment that responds to the participation and access needs of all members of the group. Introducing community agreements and sharing values can encourage participants to co-create the space before it begins. They can raise fears and concerns, just as much as they can offer their interests and curiosity. These exercises can help the participants, and the facilitator reflect on their individual agency and their ability to hold themselves accountable for how they offer their presence in the space. These practices can foster a sense of trust for participants to share their perspectives without fear of judgment.

Community Agreements

Begin with questions: What do each of us need to be present in today's activity/conversation? What do we need to engage with each other with care for ourselves?

Note: All agreements should be agreed upon by everyone in the group. Everyone should also be given the opportunity to pose questions, offer rephrasing, and ask for other agreements if needs change over the course of the activity/conversation.

Sample agreements:

Take care of yourself as you need to
(Breaks, childcare, and more, are up to you)

Speak from personal experience/uncertainty
("I know… I don't know…")

Try to offer content warnings before you share
("This may involve…")

Ask consent to ask questions of other members
("Can I ask you about what you just shared?")

Honor privacy in the space; reflect on wisdom
(Don't repeat details: "Did you hear what _____ said?")

Do not use the space to address personal conflicts
(Everyone has boundaries around personal attacks and indirect comments)

Stay grounded in our purpose for gathering today
(Building community, not resolving conflict)

For facilitators: Remember to share with the group that facilitators are also participating in the community agreements and are not exempt from them. Using either a shared screen if virtual or a large piece of paper if in-person, you can list out the agreements as each person shares them (deidentified). The paper can remain up, and the agreements can be sent in the chat for reference if the meeting is virtual.

Note on conflict resolution: One common facilitation challenge arises when participants seek out conflict resolution during a meeting scheduled about a different topic. It is often more effective to set aside a separate time to navigate conflict effectively. If a group participant wants to pursue conflict resolution, the facilitator can validate the desire and still reiterate that collective consent is needed to shift the purpose of a space. Additionally, conflict resolution requires time and preparation to engage in restoratively and not reactively. Encourage anyone who wants to engage in a conflict resolution process to reach out to the facilitator to set up a different time that can fully hear about the harm the individual has experienced and work toward restoration. If the facilitator is not trained in conflict resolution, reach out to an organization that can provide that support.

Value- Setting

Begin with questions: What is a value that each of us hopes to practice with each other during this activity/conversation? How can that value center us and ground each of us as we move through the activity/conversation and what may arise? How can we listen to the values that help us engage and practice care for ourselves?

To help set the space: For anyone who is uncertain about how to identify values, a list could be provided to help brainstorm. A value can be understood also as an intention for how someone hopes to be present.

"privacy" <u>or</u> "I won't share private conversations indirectly or directly"

"consent" <u>or</u> "I hope to ask permission and be asked permission to share/participate"

"patience" <u>or</u> "I hope to give people time to respond at their time and pace"

"autonomy" <u>or</u> "I respect a person's right to participate as they feel able"

"honesty" <u>or</u> "I hope to offer my true perspective"

"self-accountability" <u>or</u> "I hope to be mindful of what I say and how I might impact others"

"non-retaliation" <u>or</u> "I hope that what I share isn't used against me later"

"boundaries" <u>or</u> "I hope to respect and be respected for the boundaries we each have"

"openness" <u>or</u> "I hope to listen and let what someone says sink in"

"access" <u>or</u> "I won't judge anyone who takes space to care for their needs"

"listening" <u>or</u> "I won't judge anyone who appears to be listening or paying attention"

"silence" <u>or</u> "I believe that silence can be a valid form of participation or care"

For facilitators: Remember to share with the group that facilitators are also there to offer their values and intentions. Using either a shared screen or a large piece of paper, you can list out the values as each person shares them (deidentified). The paper can remain up, and the values can be sent in the chat for reference.