

Ground Rules for Dialogues

Purpose: To create and protect a safe space

Constructing the boundaries of the conversation—the limited context and manner in which it will take place—is a big part of what allows participants to open and deepen into new awareness.

Establishing ground rules by group consensus involves the whole group in creating optimal conditions for freedom of expression and exploration. The ground rules express the spirit of the discussion, which is based on listening respectfully and without argument while discussing issues that may tempt us to argue. The ground rules provide a container that encourages everyone to take an active part, even those who tend to hold back.

The group creates the ground rules; the facilitator makes sure that there is agreement, that the list is complete, and the rules are followed.

Basic ground rules to include:

- Honor confidentiality
- Respect differences
- Speak in the first person and from individual experience, not as a representative of a group
- Describe experiences, not opinions
- Do not try to persuade or change others
- Listen openly and without interruption
- Respect air time; be aware of those who are more quiet, or have a language barrier
- Avoid cross talk and side conversations