

Guidelines for Dialogue

The following Guidelines for Dialogue are based on the work of Visions, Inc. (www.visionsinc.com). They establish basic ground rules for safe, healthy conversations that will honor the diverse viewpoints and experiences of those engaged in conversation.

“Try On”

Be willing to try on ideas, ways of thinking or being that you may never have considered before, even or perhaps especially if you have a gut instinct to reject it out of hand.

“It’s OK to disagree”

“It’s Not OK to shame, blame, and attack self or others”

Engaging our differences is something we want to do and that we benefit from, but shaming, blaming or attacking ourselves or others is not a helpful way of engaging difference. Agree not to shame, blame, or attack others or ourselves.

“Self Focus” – “I” language.

Focus on your own thoughts and feelings without universalizing them or assuming others/all people agree. Use “I” language to share your experiences, perspectives, and opinions. Be aware of how you are feeling and ask yourself what your feelings might be telling you. Share your feelings when appropriate.

“Practice Both/And Thinking”

Not every question has an either/or right answer. The opposite of a profound truth may be another profound truth, not an opposing truth. “BUT” is a warning that Both/And thinking is not being practiced. BUT is generally diminutive, not additive. BUT shrinks back while AND expands.

Be Aware of “Intent/Impact”.

Someone may intend one thing with a comment, but the impact may be very different. Take responsibility for both parts of the equation. If something impacts you negatively, be willing to ask if that is what the person intended.

Confidentiality.

If it is stated that the group holds what is said in the group then we must respect that. For instance CARE groups make a point to say that the group will honor the confidence of the group. What is shared in the group is to stay in the group. Personal information is shared by the person who owns the information, feelings, and experiences; not by others, unless they have asked and received permission.