



Touchstones for Creating Safe Spaces

- **Choose for yourself when and how to participate:**

Participants are *invited* to join in the discussion, never required or pressured to do so. This is not a “share or die” event! Being fully present and listening with care is as important a contribution as speaking with care.

- **Make space for silence and reflection**

The discussion should not be fast and furious. Slow down and pay attention to the “inner teacher” that is trying to speak in you and in others.

- **No debating**

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s truth does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Seek instead, through listening deeply and asking honest, open questions, to help each participant find his or her own clarity and resourcefulness.

- **Embrace differences**

Speak your truth with “I statements,” not mountain-top declarations. Listen with an open mind to others’ truth.

- **When the going gets rough, turn to wonder**

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry: “I wonder why he or she feels/thinks this way?” “I wonder what pushed my buttons in what he or she just said?”

- **Learn to ask honest, open questions**

Instead of judging or debating what people say, or asking leading questions, ask questions that are free of judgment or advice, questions that come from a simple desire to help the speaker explore more deeply what he or she has said. “Is there a story from your life that helps explain why you feel or believe what you do?” is an honest, open question. “How could you believe something like that?” is not!

- **Observe confidentiality**

One of the most important ingredients of safe space is a high level of trust and confidence that what we say will not be passed on to others without our permission—nor we will try to advance our own agendas with other people after a gathering has ended.