

Community Agreements

How will your community work best together in community nights, spirituality nights and other community meetings? Creating community agreements is an essential step to facilitating meaningful discussions.

Creating community agreements is a RADICAL act! It ensures that community members share and distribute power amongst the group and requires the group to be accountable to each other with mutually agreed upon rules. This is what the work of equity and anti-racism is all about!

This practice of creating community agreements is common throughout community organizing and classroom management – it's helpful for meaningful group work. Try to establish this list of Community Agreements in the first few weeks of your JV year, as it can get more difficult to create this list in later months. When conversations get tough in community, this list can be a great starting point for finding common ground. Below, you will find steps to creating agreements with your community.

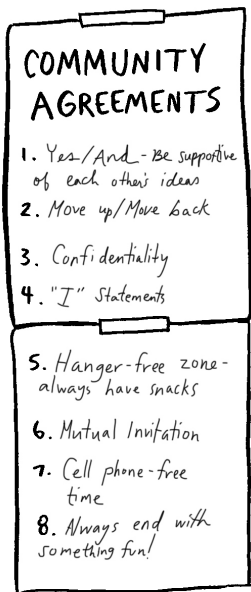
Supplies needed: a writing tool and at least one piece of paper

Roles needed: Facilitator and a Scribe – this can be the same person, but share the responsibilities if you can!

Steps to Creating Your Community Agreements

Step 1. Open with a centering prayer or poem and a round of check-ins with your community mates.

Step 2. The chosen facilitator will introduce community agreements by reading the intro paragraphs above and the list of example community agreements below.



Example community agreements:

- **Use "I" statements.** Speak from our own experience, rather than generalizing.
- **Yes/And.** Commit to having an attitude of "yes, and," rather than either/or, especially when a community mate says something that might differ from what I think. Build on each other's ideas rather than act contrarian. A related community agreement can be, "throw glitter, not shade."
- **Move up/Move back.** Share the space with each other. Be self-aware to know whether I am always the first or last person to speak.
- **Take the space you need to care for yourself.** This can include taking bathroom breaks or tea breaks. Beyond the concept of "self-care" what does "community care" look like?
- **When talking about race, agree that oppression, inequality and racism exists.** Essential to discussions about equity, this is an

**A comment about using
"Respect each other" as
a community agreement:**

Many JVs share the expectation that community mates should "respect one another." While this is an important action that all JVs should strive to do each day, each JV has a different understanding of what it means to both be respected and to offer respect to someone else. When using the term "respect" for a community agreement, break it down into smaller pieces. What does respect tangibly look like to you? If an outsider was watching your interactions with a community mate, how would they know that you are being respectful?

unequivocal fact that specifically relates to black and brown bodies.

- **Assume good intent and own the impact of what you say.** The intention of a statement may not be the same as the impact it has on a community mate.
- **Call in or call out.** Calling in is having a personal, private conversation to call attention to someone's oppressive behavior. Calling out means publicly pointing out someone's oppressive behavior. There's a pros and cons to each of these methods when wanting to correct or challenge something that someone else said.
- **There's a difference between "unsafe" and "uncomfortable."** Be aware of the important difference between these two words and the ways you might use these words during difficult discussions.
- **Gathering space will accommodate all community members.** As examples, make sure the space has enough seats and is well-lit. Discussions should occur after everyone's service hours and after everyone has eaten.
- **Use mutual invitation.** Use this process to call on each other to speak so that each person is invited to join the discussion. (See the gray box in the "Social Locations" activity for a more detailed explanation.)
- **Other things to consider for community agreements:** Are there technology concerns? Confidentiality concerns? What are accessibility concerns for each community mate?

Step 3. Begin the discussion, which should last approximately 15-40 minutes, depending on the number of people in your community. Through a process of mutual invitation, have each community member contribute at least one agreement. A contribution can be from the list above.

Step 4. Ask for clarification on any that seem unclear. This can happen either in the middle of discussion or at the end of the discussion. When done, read the list aloud.

Step 5. Decide who will write these up on a nice piece of paper and where this will be posted in the house.

Step 6. To close the discussion, end with a round of checkouts in which each person picks a community agreement that they think will be challenging for them but they hope to work on throughout the year.

For continuing individual or group reflection:

How will you use these community agreements as a base for discussions and reflections about equity and anti-racism?

Us & Co.

We are here for what amounts to a few hours,
a day at most.

We feel around making sense of the terrain,
our own new limbs,

Bumping up against a herd of bodies
until one becomes home.

Moments sweep past. The grass bends
then learns again to stand.

- Tracy K. Smith

