

Strategic Leadership

Community Agreements

Community agreements are shared norms or guidelines established to create a safe, respectful, and productive space for group discussions. They help set expectations for behavior, encourage participation, and reduce misunderstandings or harm.

Purpose of Community Agreements

- Promote respectful dialogue
- Encourage active listening and inclusivity
- Support a brave space for vulnerability
- Prevent domination or exclusion in conversations
- Foster accountability among participants

Our Agreements

To create a respectful, inclusive, and productive space for learning and dialogue, we agree to:

- ❖ **Try it On:** Be willing to “try on” new ideas, or ways of doing things that might not be what you prefer or are familiar with.
- ❖ **Practice Self-Focus:** Attend to and speak about your own experiences and responses. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experiences of others.
- ❖ **Understand the Difference Between Intent and Impact:** Try to understand and acknowledge impact. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.
- ❖ **Practice “Both/And”:** When speaking, substitute “and” for “but.” This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities.
- ❖ **Refrain from Blaming or Shaming Self & Others:** Practice giving skillful feedback [assumption of positive intent, speaking from a position of kindness, selecting words with care to not assign a judgment value or assign blame or shame, providing open and honest feedback, both positive and constructive].

- ❖ **Move Up/Move Back:** Encourage full participation by all present. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, consider “moving back” and vice versa.
- ❖ **Practice Active and Mindful Listening:** Try to avoid planning what you’ll say as you listen to others. Be willing to be surprised, to learn something new. Listen with your whole self.
- ❖ **Confidentiality:** Take home learnings but don’t identify anyone other than yourself, now or later. If you want to follow up with anyone regarding something they said in this session, ask first and respect their wishes.
- ❖ **Right to Pass:** You can say “I pass” if you don’t wish to speak [and the request will be honored and recognized as having an inherent value].
- ❖ **Practice Self Care:** Recognize your own physical and emotional needs. For example, it is acceptable to take a break and step out during a meeting.
- ❖ **Silence:** Silence is okay and can be a helpful tool. Do not feel pressure to fill silence because it may initially feel awkward.

By following the group agreements and participating, members shall make every effort to practice emotional intelligence. This refers to the ability to utilize the following self-regulation tools:

- (1) **self-awareness:** the ability to perceive your own emotions and stay aware of them while they happen;
- (2) **self-management:** ability to use awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and positively direct your behavior by managing emotional reactions to the situations and people around you;
- (3) **social awareness:** ability to accurately perceive other people’s emotions to manage interactions successfully, engage in clear communication, and effectively communicate during misunderstandings and conflicts.



These agreements, “[Agreements for Multicultural Interactions](#)” were adapted by the East Bay Meditation Center from a document created by VISIONS Inc. entitled “Guidelines for Productive Work Sessions.” For more information, please see www.eastbaymeditation.org and www.visions-inc.org.