

The Northwest Network

of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse

Guiding Values

We claim these values as fundamental to completing our daily work and to fulfilling our mission. We locate these principles in our dealings with our co-workers, the survivors we support and the communities to which we are accountable. These values are the yardstick, upon which the integrity of our means can be measured, for in the movement to end violence and manifest liberation—we know that the means are always the ends.

Our personal Agency, our sense of power from within, is essential in our interactions both with each other and with those seeking support from us. Through a sense of being rooted deep within ourselves, we are able to be open and branch out with ourselves, toward others, and into our surroundings. It is through a solid sense of Agency that we have the capacity to continue to evolve, in spite of forces that may be restrictive, with accountability for our selves as the backdrop from which we proceed.

Because we recognize ourselves to be powerful persons even as we operate under conditions of oppression, we strive to maintain our own Integrity. We protect our integrity by making choices that are congruent with our values and moving steadily toward being our best possible selves. We regard ourselves with grace and compassion as we reach toward this vision, and are committed to working in good faith with each other.

Intentionality is the deliberate thoughtfulness through which we approach all our activities and endeavors. We abide in abundance, having the time and resources to consider new ideas, think critically about our previous assumptions and be accountable to our values in the development of our alliances, practices and relationships.

We are willing to be curious, to take risks and to think outside accepted models. Intentionality is the means by which we reconcile paradox, sit thoughtfully with difference and sustain our focus. When we feel anxious, pressed or defensive, Intentionality is the value that will ground our work and inform our response.

It is by cultivating our receptiveness—our skills of making relaxed, caring spaces for people to share experiences, analyses, challenges and visions—that we create the conditions necessary for Learning. When we have the humility to ask, "What can I learn in this moment?" we become open to and grateful for situations that before may only have confounded, angered or hurt us. Learning renews, invigorates and expands our capacity for social and personal change. IN connects us to our many histories and helps us imagine our possible futures.

We recognize Complexity in the world and resist analyses that flatten or simplify. We hold onto Complexity in matters that are immediate as well as global. We simultaneously acknowledge and feel compassion for another's pain even as we hold them accountable for their behavior. Similarly, we can honor our experiences surviving oppression and abuse even as we challenge ourselves in the places where we are privileged. We see the need to hold onto each other in community, and to hold each other and ourselves accountable within that community. We do not see these needs as contradictory, and strive to hold both in our hands at the same time.

We approach each situation with intelligence and Discernment. This allows us the flexibility to respond appropriately to individual, complex situations. We use Discernment to guide our choices through complexity and to order our values when they appear to compete. Through Discernment we make thoughtful choices about where and how to direct our resources and attention.

We regard Safety as an active and engaging process, which we create for others and ourselves. We honor the ways in which we all experience Safety, even as we resist accepting it as the expense of others. Oppression relies on fear, specifically on maintaining an environment in which we are afraid of one another. In pursuit of living lives that are not fear-based, we must examine fears, expose and push aside falsehoods and dwell in the place of our most confident and truest selves.

Through Grace, we find the forgiving, reconciled and peaceful places within our selves and our work. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes, *"Where there is no forgiveness, there is no Life."* Through Grace, we actively focus on life-sustaining beliefs and deliberate behaviors. We view Grace as an undercurrent that flows through us and into our lives.

Living our values daily is accomplished by the practice of being accountable for ourselves. It is a practice we seek to make habit by choosing it deliberately and consistently. We believe that where Accountability lives, abuse shall not dwell. The loving process of holding ourselves and each other accountable is the very foundation of building nonviolent and interdependent relationships, family and world communities.

Maintaining connection and relation with one another may feel a great challenge for us, particularly in times of turmoil or pain. Our work being rooted in a large understanding of oppression, we are all too familiar with the ways division can undermine entire communities and movements. We believe passionately in the worth of holding on to one another, through differences and commonalities and recognize the invaluable need for compassion and humility as cornerstones of Community.

Liberation

We live daily with both the practical and theoretical manifestations of Liberation. As we work together—we place Liberation before us as our constant goal. We identify systematic oppression, acting through and on individuals and institutions, as the force that limits liberation. We consider openly how we have participated as agents of oppression within ourselves and against others.

Just as a single seed has all the information of the mature tree, each moment of celebration, humor and joyfulness holds the complete promise of Liberation and reconciliation for all people. We endeavor to take, moment by moment, the leap of faith described by María Limón—*“to act as if the struggle to end oppression had already been won.”*

In the words of Audre Lorde, “It is necessary to scrutinize not only the truth of what we speak, but the truth of that language by which we speak it...to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding.”

We are interested in building values-based communities. It is our goal to hold onto people across varied experiences and identities. Holding on to each other requires that we ask ourselves over and over that it would take to stay here, to work towards the safety of the person across the room, across town, and across the globe. We believe that building and maintaining commonality begins with establishing shared values. Values that guide us toward choice, interdependence and liberation. Values upon which we can call over and over again when crafting our ways with one another.