

Principles for Safety + Support

Mutual Support and Cooperation

We are all here because we want and choose to be here. Because of this we agree to cooperate and support each other to the best of our ability.

Self Care

It is my responsibility to take care of myself – eat, drink, rest, ask for support, sleep, take a pause, when I need to. I don't have to take care, consciously or subconsciously, of anyone else, because we all agree to practice self-care. When I am not trying to take care of others, I am more available and present in the group. I use "I statements" when I share.

Choice

I have choice in every situation. My no is honored and respected as much as my yes. It is safe to say no.

Contact

Brief and Frequent Eye Contact every few minutes supports the person talking to not feel overwhelmed by all eyes on them; the group stays connected even if there are difficult topics being shared; and oxytocin, the hormone of bonding, love, and pleasure is emitted. Our social engagement systems stay active; it is more likely we will remain present and connected, and less likely our autonomic nervous system will get triggered and we will become activated. Attachment specialist Allan Schore explains, "Positive looks are the most vital stimulus to the growth of the social, emotionally intelligent brain." Positive looks, touch, and sound connect our neurons with each other and create a network of social intelligence. *Conscious Touch* allows for the opportunity to support or be supported physically with loving presence; the opportunity to consider how contact might feel and practice saying yes, or no; a settling to occur; and contact that is reciprocal and clear.

Pause

Taking pauses supports self-regulation and self-care. If I feel a strong sensation of discomfort or a strong emotion when someone else is sharing, and it is keeping me from being present, I can take a pause. If I feel that sensation three times this is a sign to take a pause. When I take a pause I may need a moment to take something in, breath deeply, or I may need to name my feeling or sensation and get some kind of support, such as a hand on my shoulder.

Confidentiality

All my feelings are welcome here. I am safe to be exactly who I am and how I am. People in this group honor and respect my privacy.

Transformation

When all of these principles are utilized, real and lasting transformation, change on an embodied level, can occur. We can self-regulate as well as co-regulate with others in the group. This supports us as individuals, strengthens our group, and nourishes the work we do together.

Adapted from the work of Ray Castellino