

Facilitator's Guide to Using the Agreements

Go through each of the agreements. If you have enough time, you can occasionally ask for someone in the group to define an agreement. At the end, ask everyone if they agree to these, and to show their agreement by raising a hand or some other motion.

Be Aware of Time

We have a lot on the agenda. We want to be respectful of people's time by keeping on schedule and ending on time.

Step Up, Step Up: Step up your participation, step up your listening

This is a more affirmative way of saying “step up, step back.” If you are shy about speaking in groups, this is the perfect opportunity to step up your participation. If you feel comfortable speaking in groups, this is the perfect opportunity to step up your listening.

Oppression Exists

The existence of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc. is not up for debate. They exist in society and they exist here in this space. We make an agreement with each other to be conscious of their functioning and to confront oppressive behavior.

Use the “Ouch”

If something is sensitive, please use the “ouch” to interrupt. The person using the “ouch” is not obligated to explain the issue.

* When someone ouches, ask them if they want to explain why. They don't have to do that if they don't feel comfortable. If they do, we typically acknowledge the

ouch as a group, try to understand what happened and how we can change it, and then move forward. It's difficult when someone tries to defend themselves from the ouch. In this case, bring it back to the agreements. Say that why the person felt the ouch is not up for debate. It's our responsibility to accept that and change it going forward.

Use the "Whoa"

If you hear something you don't understand (like an acronym), use the "whoa" to interrupt and get an explanation. This is for everyone's good: if one person didn't understand, it's likely other people didn't either.

We all have something to teach, we all have something to learn

We agree to recognize that all of us have knowledge and experience to share and all of us also have things we don't know or understand.

Unity – Struggle – Unity

We agree that we all came to this space for the same reasons. Sometimes our conversations or work together will get hard, but we agree to struggle through that together. Another way of saying this is hard does not always equal bad.

Cell Phone Policy

We generally prefer to ask folks to turn off cell phones, but we also know that some people have kids, emergency or other situations and need their phones. Those folks should turn phones to vibrate and should agree to take only critically important calls. Everyone else turn phones off. In general be respectful.

Agreements developed by the Vermont Workers' Center