

Strategies for Implementing Community Agreements in Meetings/Group Conversations

Dialogue is a specific form of communication which promotes connection and understanding, especially across differences. It can be a powerful way to promote inclusion in academic and professional spaces. This resource includes strategies that the IDP team has found helpful for encouraging dialogue. These strategies are particularly useful for navigating complex group-level conversations and creating an inclusive learning and working environment. They also offer practical ways to implement [Community Agreements](#), some of which we have highlighted here.

Strategy	What it looks like in practice	Community Agreement(s) and other goals supported
Collect group input before a meeting	<p>Ask participants to share agenda items or questions before a meeting or a series of meetings</p> <p>For specific challenging conversations, try prompt questions using an anonymous survey format. You might want to share the anonymous information during the meeting (print, share a link or, gather responses on index cards then collect, shuffle, and redistribute them to be read by participants).</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take space, make space • Be both teachers and learners • Challenge the idea, not the person <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the benefits and opportunities of hearing diverse perspectives
Set expectations for not engaging with devices	<p>Start the conversation by asking participants to close and put away devices unless they are needed to engage in the conversation.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice active and empathetic listening • Be here now <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model the impact of sharing intentional, engaged time
Surface motivations and sources of discomfort held by participants	<p>Ask each person to reflect on two questions prior to the meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What energizes or excites you about this conversation? 2. What about it makes you feel uncomfortable or challenged? <p>You can then invite people to share their reflections in pairs or small groups, with the full group, or anonymously. This can help to open up the conversation and encourage authentic engagement and connection.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace discomfort • Acknowledge judgments and assumptions, including our own <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight discomfort as essential for learning, creating shared meaning, and affecting change

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Use the “three hands” strategy	<p>After posing a question, state that you will wait for at least three participants to raise their hands to offer input before calling on anyone.</p> <p>You can then call first on voices that have been quieter in the conversation, or those who you think will offer a fresh perspective.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take space, make space • Be both teachers and learners <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make space for those who need time to process • Prioritize voices with new and/or key perspectives
Set an expectation of “no interruptions”	<p>Set this expectation by asking participants to refrain from responding or envisioning their response while someone is speaking, and noting that this is an essential demonstration of mutual respect and empathy. Interruptions or raised hands while someone is speaking indicate that the listener hasn't listened fully.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One microphone • Practice active and empathetic listening <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote constructive communication, connection, and the development of trust and mutual understanding
Pull in voices	<p>Put people who tend to take less space in positions that give them the opportunity to take more space. You might say that you want to hear from people who have not yet spoken, explicitly ask for alternative perspectives, and poke holes in dominant views that have been shared.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take space, make space • Be both teachers and learners • Acknowledge judgments and assumptions, including our own <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight that all voices are welcome and needed, especially voices who are or feel less empowered and/or have alternative perspectives
Start with reflection and “idea dump”	<p>After posing a complex or challenging question, offer quiet time for all to reflect individually and write their answers/thoughts before asking them to engage with each other.</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be here now • Acknowledge judgments and assumptions, including our own • Practice active and empathetic listening

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Scaffold conversations	<p>Using small groups and think-pair-shares before building to a large group conversation gives all participants the space to reflect on and share their perspectives.</p> <p>For example, send participants to small groups with a prompt and a reminder to share the space equitably. Be mindful of group dynamics (e.g. who might need to take or make more space for their voice.)</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take space, make space • Be both teachers and learners <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the importance and impact of hearing diverse perspectives
LARA	<p>Remind participants the goals and stages of LARA and encourage them to use this framework; model using LARA in conversations.</p> <p>Be generous in assuming intentions (and say this) but be courageous about sharing impact in a way that allows for dialogue.</p> <p>IDP LARA Guide</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice active and empathetic listening • Be both teachers and learners • Trust intent, name impact
Retrospective review of goals, practices, and outcomes	<p>After taking an action, do a retrospective review and use this to inform the unit's next steps. Prompt faculty members to reflect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did we plan to do and why? 2. What did we end up actually doing (and, if relevant, why did we shift our plan)? 3. What happened when we implemented this plan? Why? 4. What have we learned from this about what we'd like to do next time? 	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories stay, lessons leave • Acknowledge judgments and assumptions, including our own • Challenge the idea, not the person • Trust intent, name impact <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus the group's attention on the importance of group processes for setting and implementing goals • Encourage individuals to reflect on their personal contributions to the group climate and its patterns

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Reflect on the conversation	After an important or challenging group conversation, ask each participant to reflect on and share one thing they learned. Lessons might be shared using think-pair-shares, small group conversations, or a large group go-around.	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories stay, lessons leave • Challenge the idea, not the person • Trust intent, name impact <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote participants' sense of ownership, agency, and capacity in the group
Offer feedback about the conversation itself	<p>For example, you might say: "I've noticed that we are struggling to make and take space, as we keep hearing from a few of the same voices. What do we need as a group to work on this?" or</p> <p>"I see our group working hard to actively listen to one another. Though we had moments of challenge, this focus on listening helped us to have a constructive and respectful dialogue today."</p>	<p><i>Community Agreement(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Community Agreement that could be named to support clear feedback to the group <p><i>Other goal(s) supported:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redirecting discussions and debates toward dialogue • Model that leaders are watching for and expecting all to engage in constructive, respectful dialogue