



GENERAL GUIDELINES

Safety:

Inform participants that the meeting is not supposed to take the place of a therapy group. “We care for and support each other, and the purpose of this meeting is xxx.” Reassure participants that they will not be asked to disclose their personal trauma history.

Predictability:

Create an agenda and if possible send it to participants before the meeting.

Collaboration and Cooperation:

Ask if anyone wants to add items to the agenda.

Trustworthiness:

Start and end meetings on time.

Emotional and Physical Regulation:

Indicate where the restrooms are located

Provide cold water to drink

Ensure the acoustics will allow everyone to be heard

Include people joining via video or telephone in the introductions and each discussion

Warn participants to dress in layers if you cannot regulate the temperature

Ask participants to refrain from wearing strong perfumes/colognes
(Trauma survivors often have a heightened sense of smell.)

Try to avoid cluttered or cramped meeting rooms

Accommodate people who want to sit near an exit or at the back

Give ‘trigger warnings’ if material is going to be introduced that could be activating



AGREEMENTS

As a group, participants come up with agreements that will help them feel physically and emotionally safe as well as create an environment that is conducive to collaboration and cooperation. The facilitator's role is not to 'enforce rules' but to steer the group back to the predetermined mutual agreements. It is helpful if the agreements can be written up on easel paper/whiteboard for the sake of latecomers and as a visual reminder for the group.

Suggestions for Agreements:

- Choice: For example, participants can choose to speak or to pass and speak later (or not).
- Self-care: "Please take breaks as needed. We encourage you to take care of yourself."
- Confidentiality: ('Vegas rule') - What is said in the room stays in the room.
- Be careful to only share the story that is yours to tell.
- Survivor empowerment: Never speak for a survivor when they can speak for themselves.
- Headlines only. No gory details. (This is to prevent retraumatization.) Headline example: "I was sexually assaulted by a teacher when I was in high school."
- Avoid talking over another person or interrupting.
- Ask before offering advice.
- If someone discloses hold space for them - don't rush on to the next person or fill the space with your own story/commentary.
- If a participant discloses, don't assume they want to talk about what they revealed afterwards.
- Step forward, step back. "We really value and need those with strong, confident voices and if you are someone who tends to speak a lot, maybe step back and create space for others. If you are someone who does not usually speak, consider stepping forward and sharing your thoughts. We need everyone's voice."
- How do we feel about cell phones? Some people regulate by scrolling through their phone, other people have value judgements about that ("it's rude"). Do we agree to take calls outside the meeting space?