

University of Washington Botanic Gardens and Arboretum Foundation

Community Guidelines

For Courageous Conversations about Race and Social Justice

Believe People

Honor and respect the stories and experiences of others. Avoid rationalizing emotions and instead accept them as real and valid. Be willing to “try on” new ideas that might not be what you prefer or know.

Expect and Accept Non-Closure

There is no “quick fix.” The more we discuss, the more we learn; the more we learn, the more appropriate and promising our actions and interventions will be.

Find Comfort in Discomfort

It is normal to feel discomfort while exploring racial and social inequity. While learning and discussion may not get any easier, your ability to engage in more meaningful conversations will expand. Be courageous, courteous, and stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Consider and Address Intent and Impact

Assume best intentions AND try to understand and acknowledge impact. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.

Practice Self-Focus

Attend to and speak about your own experiences. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others. Use “I statements.”

Confidentiality

What’s said here stays here; what’s learned here leaves here. If you want to follow up with anyone regarding something they said, ask first and respect their wishes. Don’t share the stories of others.

Refrain from Blaming and Shaming

Critique ideas, not people. Instead, name behaviors/actions and request/suggest changes without attacking personal character.

Practice Mindful Listening

Try to avoid planning what you’re going to say as you listen to others. Listen with your whole self.

Practice “Both/And”

When thinking and speaking, substitute “and” for “but.” This practice acknowledges and honors multiple truths. Example: That was well-said, BUT I’d like to make some suggestions. VS That was well-said, AND I’d like to make some suggestions.

Move Up/ Move Back

Encourage full participation by all present. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, be supported in listening more, and if you tend to be quiet, be encouraged to share your thoughts.

Adapted from “Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center,” East Bay Meditation Center “Agreements for Multicultural Interactions at EBMC,” and The Denver Foundation’s “Agreements for Courageous Conversations and Active Learning