



THE NINE ASKS: Safer Space Guidelines

1. **Be as honest and vulnerable as possible.**

The goal of the learning community atmosphere is to allow us to be as close to our whole selves as possible. In efforts to be true to each other during conversation, “don’t tell me what I want to hear”. Tell me the truth about what you think, how you feel and who you really are.

2. **Respect boundaries and thresholds.**

There may be times when dialogue uncovers pain we do not desire to share or relive in the learning community. While being ever-vigilant of working toward stretching ourselves, we respect every individual’s right and discretion to avoid disclosure to the point of being put in harm’s way.

3. **No judgment.**

We have all self-selected and agreed to participate in the learning community. We understand that the format invites us to process different diversity lenses through our personal experiences. Because perception is reality, our experiences are not “wrong” – just different. We will work to treat the differences as opportunities to learn about perspectives alternative to our own.

4. **Confidentiality.**

Continued dialogue outside of the learning community is encouraged in efforts to aid others in becoming more comfortable with diversity dialogue. In efforts to honor the right that we own our own narratives, we will not mention the names of individuals in relation to statements made in the learning community in order to honor their privacy and confidentiality.

5. **Come back to me.**

Trust that we are making every effort to engage in an honest and appreciative dialogue in the learning community. There will be instances when could benefit from more time to prepare our thoughts and responses before sharing. This may require a little patience from both of us and at moments, the acknowledgement that silence is also a voice.

6. **Respect the process of learning the “right” language.**

There will absolutely be times when we contribute to the conversation and the words/mannerisms may not be expressed in the most affirming manner. Know that we are approaching the process and the topic of discussion with the best of intentions. We will accept each other *where we are* and if possible, help each other in the process of reframing thoughts to be more affirming.

7. **Take the time to listen first.**

Sometimes in conversation – particularly ones in which we are passionately engaged – we have a habit of waiting to speak. We acknowledge that there is diversity in the type of processors in the learning community (introverts and extroverts). We will try not to dominate discussions so that we can maximize the inclusion of *all* of our voices.

8. **Permission to ask and/or decline.**

Each learning community session should be viewed as a teachable moment. We are all each other’s teachers and students. As students, we reserve the right to ask questions in order to gain information that will help to broaden our perspectives. As teachers, we also reserve the right to decline answering if the inquiry poses a threat (perceived or real) to our boundaries and thresholds.

9. **Stay in your seat.**

When in heated discussions, it is natural to have verbal as well as nonverbal reactions. We will try to show up for conversations that we anticipate will be difficult to have. We will try to stay in the room and see the conversation through. We will also try to process communication in a way that is not verbally or physically threatening to our learning community members. Finally, we will also make thorough attempts to notice the body language and unspoken cues of those around us.