



## Going Deeper - Conversation Agreements

It may be helpful to explore the Conversations Agreements in more detail.

### **Be Curious**

Listen with a desire to understand and learn more about others. A conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in others' differing beliefs and opinions.

- Maintain an attitude of exploration and learning. Be open to hearing all points of view.
- Listen for common interests and concerns and appreciate that we will disagree on some beliefs and opinions.
- Although an individual's beliefs and opinions may differ from yours, that doesn't make them less valid. Seek to understand WHY another person may be having a different experience than you and try to see the situation from their perspective.

### **Be Open**

Question your assumptions and suspend judgment so you can hear different perspectives. Setting judgment aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Being open enables you to become aware of things not otherwise seen.

- Judging is hard-wired in our brains. After we meet people in less than a second, we assess who they are, what they value and believe, and what we can expect from them. This built-in ability is critical to safety in some situations. Be aware of your judgment and put it to the side while you listen.
- Make room for new knowledge, new ways of seeing and understanding
- Question your assumptions and look for new insights.

## **Be Uncomfortable**

Be okay with feeling uncomfortable as you encounter people with different backgrounds, cultures and values. Tell your story to the degree that it's comfortable for you. Each response or story is a gift of trust. Receive it in a trustworthy way.

- People will have different reactions to the conversations. Know that being uncomfortable isn't always a bad thing, especially if you're used to feeling comfortable. Your goal is to create a space where individuals can express their opinions honestly and where the group's feelings are valued and protected.
- Tell your own story. Rather than worrying about saying the right thing, be true to yourself. It's okay if you don't feel 100% confident. It's okay to be learning and growing.
- Learning moments often come from uncomfortable conversations. Do not run away from a learning moment because you are uncomfortable.

## **Be Respectful**

With respect and civility, engage with others by valuing and honoring others' viewpoints and experiences. Be authentic and welcome that from others. Be considerate of others who are doing the same. When others are speaking, listen without interruption or crosstalk.

- Give those you are talking to the benefit of the doubt. Assume good intentions and anticipate the best from others.
- Listen to understand, not to respond; momentarily put aside what you will say next.
- Be mindful of your behavior. Notice how you internally are reacting/responding when other speak. Pay attention to how your words and your silence are impacting the experience for others in the group. Be conscious and mindful of your facial expressions.
- Don't interrupt or talk over someone else who is speaking, even if you are excited. When you get the urge to jump in, try writing your comment down on your topic guide so that you can mention it when it's your turn to talk