

Guidelines /Touchstones for Reconciliation Sharings /Discussions

1. *We will try to practice deep listening and to be totally present with the person speaking.*

Even though we may have the intention to listen deeply, our mind may wander. Perhaps we are agreeing, disagreeing, feeling agitated or wanting to respond. If we are mindful of our thoughts and inner dialog, we can choose to come back to being present with the person speaking.

2. *We will try to practice mindful speech.*

Topics should emanate from our life and our experiences. We are here to speak our truth. We should try to avoid discussing issues that are theoretical, but, rather, share based upon our own experience.

Remembering that ethnicities are not monolithic, we should try to speak our truth by using qualifiers such as “some”, “many”, etc.

We should neither interrupt, nor engage in dialogue with another person while someone is speaking.

Showing respect for the previous speaker and what has just been said, we will try to pause before speaking to allow time for the previous person’s words to be received fully by all present.

3. *We will avoid giving advice.*

It is helpful to use the word “I” instead of “you”. We are not here to give or to receive advice. We are not here to fix someone.

If someone asks for advice, it is fine to share our experience. Speaking from our own experience eliminates the tendency to give advice.

4. *We will be mindful of our participation level.*

We would like to hear from everyone equally without anyone dominating or completely disengaging.

At the same time, we realize that these discussions can bring up strong feelings that compel a person to pour out their heart or hold back. Please let us know when strong emotions are causing you to wish to speak out more or less than usual.

5. *Whenever possible, we will acknowledge uncomfortable responses: say “ouch!” or “oops,” then explain.*

Let others know when you are responding with pain to remarks made in the group, either from others (“ouch!”) or yourself (“oops!”), especially when your feelings are impeding your ability to stay connected to others. Help the group understand the reason for your reaction.

6. *All that arises is confidential*

Confidentiality secures the safety of the group. After the discussions, if we want to talk to someone about what he or she said in the group, we must first ask if it is okay. Sometimes a person does not want to talk more about what he or she said, and this is a respectful way to honor that.

These guidelines are offered for the good of the entire gathering. Thinking of these guidelines as trainings, and learning to apply them skillfully in all of our interactions, will help us to cultivate compassionate communication wherever we are.