

"After sixty years of political activism and study, I can boil down what I have learned into three propositions:

- 1) Labor in the white skin cannot be free where in the black it is branded:**
- 2) For revolutionaries, dual power is the key to strategy;**
- 3) The emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves.**

Noel Ignatiev

**Organizers of the Dual Power Gathering acknowledge that we are meeting on the lands of the Council of Three Fires—the Ojibwa, Ottawa and Potawatomi—as well as the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sauk and Meskwaki peoples stolen after two-and-a-half years of open warfare, decades of violent encroachment, which was resisted by a pan-Indian movement to keep settlers out of the Great Lakes region. One of the goals of the gathering is to discuss the importance of indigenous leadership of the movements to defend water and life and our collective responsibility to abolish the settler colonial states occupying Turtle Island.
Land Back!**

We recognize that the COVID pandemic is ongoing and a concern for many attendees. Core members of the coordinating team work in healthcare and have been on the frontlines throughout the past two years, and know the problems first hand from personal experience with long COVID. This is the primary reason we opted for Dual Power 2022 to be an outside event, in a park, in a space where our events can take up more space as needed, and that attendees will be sleeping in individual or small group tents with people they are responsible to.

Prior to the event we ask that all attendees take a COVID test 48-72 hours before attending, and to stay home if they test positive or are symptomatic. We'll also ask anyone who can to bring some rapid tests so that they can use them in case they're needed to supplement rapid testing capacity of the gathering.

At the event we expect attendees to wear masks in situations where they are in close quarters with each other, such as during morning assembly and in meal lines. We will be breaking into smaller groups that disperse throughout the park throughout the event. We will have rapid tests on hand during the event, and our medics will be available to hand them out to anyone who looks like they might have symptoms or who wants to double check.

We will be expecting and asking attendees to practice mask reciprocity, where if you see that someone near you wearing a mask, you too put on a mask. We will be announcing and reminding people of these things each morning and throughout the event. N95 masks will be available for any attendee who requests one.

We do however want to emphasize that we as organizers will not have the capacity to eliminate COVID risks and we are all relying on our collective capacity to encourage and practice mask wearing when appropriate for all attendees. All attendees should be aware that the gathering is taking place in public parks and there will be members of the public not wearing masks. We want to be transparent about this risk to anyone considering coming to the event.

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Short Norms

- No intentional oppression
- Assume Best Intentions
- Make space, take space –
Be aware of the space you're taking up
- Act in solidarity, not charity
- Treat each other with respect
- Yes to passion. No to obligation.
- Ask for support if you need it /
Offer support if you can
- All contributions are welcome
- We strive for full inclusion
- We value feedback
- Dissent and questions are a gift to the group
- Vulnerability and sharing emotions are encouraged

Safer Space Norms

- No intentional perpetuation of racism, sexism, transphobia, ableism, or any other harmful power structure will be tolerated.
- Defer to the recipient of any action to decide for themselves whether that action was innocent or harmful, and we support them in finding a resolution that prevents repeated abuse. Verbal, physical, and/or sexual assault will not be tolerated.
- Mistakes are human; assume best intentions. We are all doing ongoing work to unpack harmful behaviors and language. Microaggressions and other slip-ups will be either privately called-in by a friend or addressed in the moment, depending on the context and scope of the behavior/language to be addressed.
- Act in solidarity, not charity, with marginalized groups and individuals. Have a non-hierarchical view of intersections of oppression. Always defer to lived experience.
- Speak from your own experience. Don't assume what other people are thinking or put words in other people's mouths.
- If it would be helpful to the group to share someone else's story, do it anonymously unless you have their explicit consent to share identifying details. Not everyone will want to share their stories and that is okay.
- Mutual support is essential, but please ask first if you need emotional labor. Respect each other and, in the name of voluntary relations, emotional labor will be respected.

Go with the flow – This event is intended to help you and all the other attendees find the time and space to talk with and learn from each other.

Follow your passion – Go to the sessions that interest you.

Take responsibility for your own learning – If there are topics you are really interested in that don't appear on the agenda at first, you need to put them on there

The Rules of Interaction and Movement

The whole point of the unconference is to interact with the people and topics to where you can add value and learn.

This can change throughout the unconference, so a conversation you were initially drawn to may turn into one that no longer interests you. If you were participating in a traditional conference, you would be polite and stay --maybe zoning out or checking your email or social media on your phone as the speaker/panel presents. In an unconference, you would do exactly the opposite, using the Rule of the Two Feet, which states that "if at any point you are no longer learning or adding value to a conversation, you take your two feet and go somewhere else." Importantly, you do NOT apologize to the group and come up with an excuse to leave. You just leave.

When you leave a conversation, you refer back to the agenda that was built during the kickoff (you can encourage participants to take a photo of the agenda with their cell phone) and go to a new location. As you move in search of a new conversation, you can operate in two ways:

- as a butterfly, walking about and unobtrusively listening to different conversations; or,
- as a bumblebee, who jumps into a conversation right away and points at connections and data gathered in other conversations (in other words, cross-pollinating conversations.)

Note that even the person who initially proposed the topic that got the conversation started can two feet away.

As a result of this organic way of moving in and out of conversations, some of the groups might dwindle down to 2 people, dissipate completely, or break out into different groups/threads, while others might grow in numbers.

Convening a session...

There are several key points about an unconference:

You do not need to do preparation in order to convene a session. If you get an idea the day of the event, call a session.

There is no 'right way' to lead a session. However there is a bias towards interaction and discussion.

Choose a format for your session that will help you achieve your vision.

Here are a few ideas about different session types to get you thinking about possibilities.

Types of sessions

- **The longer formal presentation** - This is tricky, because it's difficult to make a formal presentation interactive. But if you have a big, well-developed idea you can pull it off.
- **A short presentation to get things started** - 5-15 minutes of prepared material/comments by the session leader followed by an interactive discussion
- **Group discussion** - Someone identifies a topic they are interested in, others come to join the conversation and an interesting discussion happens
- **My Big (or Little) Question** - You have a question you want to know the answer to, and you think others in the group could help you answer it. This format could also just be the seed of a conversation.

- **Show and tell** - You have a cool project, a demo, or just something to show and let people play with that is the springboard for all the conversation in the session. Alternatively, you can invite others to bring their own items to show and tell (perhaps with a theme), and everyone takes a turn sharing.
- **Learn how to do X** - If you're inclined to teach, this can be simple and effective. Bring the equipment that you need, and have a plan that will let you teach five, ten, or 15 people how to do something all at the same time.

Do take photos of different elements of your program so you can share them with others either at sessions you lead or in other sessions.

Advice about leading a session...

- If you convene a session, it is your responsibility to “hold the space” for your session. You hold the space by leading a discussion, by posting a “first question,” or by sharing information about your program. Be the shepherd – stay visible, be as involved as necessary, be a beacon of sanity that guides the group.
- Ask for help holding the space if you need it. You might, for example, put a session on the board and know that you are so passionate about the topic that it would be better if someone else, someone more objective, facilitates the discussion. Choose someone from your team, or another participant who is interested in the topic.

- Don't assume people in the room know more, or less, than you do. You never know who is going to be interested in your session. You might want to start by asking people to hold up their hands if they've been involved with the topic for more than five years, for one to five years, or for one year or less.
- Don't be upset if only two people show up to your session. Those two people are the ones who share your interest.
- Don't feel that you have to "fill" up an hour of time. If what you have to say only takes 15 min and the group has finished interacting—then the session can end. At the start of the conference, we will discuss guidelines for how this can happen.
- Don't feel pressure to have everything take "only" an hour. If you start with a short presentation, and then a group conversation gets going, and your discussion needs to continue past an hour – find a way to make this happen. You might be able to keep talking for awhile in the space you are in, or move to another part of the conference area, or post "Part 2" on the agenda. At the start of the conference, we will discuss guidelines for how this can happen.
- Be Brave! Others are interested in making your session work!
- Do think about the ideas that you want to cover in your session, and how you want to cover them. But don't feel as though you need to prepare a great deal. (If you're over-prepared, your session might lose energy.)
- Experiment with the kind of sessions you lead. There is no such thing as "failure" at an unconference.



ACTIVE LISTENING
Stacy Rene Erenberg

from omi CASTRO of AMPLIFY RJ
 FORMS of COMMUN that show you're F

RADICAL LISTENING
 is a step further by showing you're INVESTED in what someone is

WITHIN THE CONTEXT of ABOLITION

NAME A TIME YOU FELT DEEPLY HEARD & UNDERSTOOD...



BODY LANGUAGE (stick figure)

OPEN-ENDED questions (laptop)

AFFIRMATIONS (thumbs up)

REFLECTING back (magnifying glass)

SUMMARIES

WHAT I HEARD was....

... IS THAT RIGHT?

Let's P...
 NEXT: USING "STATE RESTORATIVE"

COMMUNICATION
PAYING attention



BUILD YOUR ABOLITIONIST TOOLBOX

series
MAY 2022



CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT in which PEOPLE feel SAFE to SHARE their STORIES

PRACTICING the WORLD we WANT as we BUILD it TOGETHER

SAYING

SHOWING Care

REFUSING DISPOSABILITY

PREVENT HARM

1. DIAGNOSIS

IMPLYING you are RIGHT, JUDGING, BLAMING



2. DENIAL of PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

ABSOLVING yourself

3. "DESERVE" THINKING

PUNITIVE model of "GOODNESS" or "BADNESS"



ROAD BLOCKS to GOOD LISTENING



TELLING THE SPEAKER WHAT TO DO

ARGUING/ LECTURING

CHANGING the SUBJECT

BLAMING

Let's ROLE PLAY!

FEELINGS & NEEDS

TRY INSTEAD
PLAY BASEBALL



Lean TOWARDS CURIOSITY & SIT IN DISCOMFORT

PAIRS LISTEN to STORIES of BOTH EXPERIENCING & CAUSING HARM

A HIT:

- ATTENTIVE BODY LANGUAGE
- REFLECTING BACK
- INVITING PLAYER TO SOLVE off field

USE BOARDS. to NAME feelings & NEEDS

LEVEL: ...
MENTS
RATIVE
STIONS

ERG'S
IT COMMUNICATION

STRIKE ZONE:

- GETTING DEFENSIVE
- NOT LETTING THE PERSON VENT
- GIVING ADVICE





Often "S" is added to this...reminding us to not take ourselves too SERIOUSLY!

It's a simple skill for self-awareness.

When these basic needs are not met, it's hard to think straight, make good decisions, and take care of yourself.

Facilitation Principles

Here are a few core facilitation principles. Someone who's great at just these would be an excellent facilitator. The rest of this guide provides examples and specifics.

- **Clarity** – Make everything as clear and as simple as possible so it's easier for people to participate.
- **Focus on the group** – Pay attention to the group. What does the group need?
- **Steward the process** – You focus on the process so others can focus on the content.

Facilitation Roles

A facilitator wears many hats as a result of being a steward of the process.

- **Keep the meeting on track** – Keeps discussion to one topic at a time and finish each topic before moving on to the next one.
- **Stack** – Tracks who wants to talk and whose turn it is to talk.
- **The big picture** – Makes the purposes of the meeting and topics clear to all.
- **Vibeswatch** – Maintains awareness of participants' levels of emotional, mental, and physical needs throughout the meeting/conversation.
- **Timekeeper** – Keeps track of time and what's left on the agenda. Reminds people of the time so they can decide what's important to prioritize.
- **Decisions** – Checks for consensus and temperature checks for decisions as needed. Follows the decision making / consensus process the group has agreed to.
- **Conflict Resolution** – Evaluates how to handle conflict if it arises.

Facilitation Tips

There are a lot of tips here, but remember the key is to just on the group. What does the group need? These are just some ways to respond to what the group needs.

- **Explain everything** – You’re the narrator of the meeting. What can be obvious to you can be confusing to someone else so explain what’s happening in the meeting (especially if there are new people present). This includes explaining what you’re doing as a facilitator.
- **Pay attention** – People are relying on you to support them (to speak, to address a problem, etc). Look for hand signals, people with confused expressions, people who clearly want to say something but aren’t, etc. If you’re distracted, everyone is distracted. Listen.
- **Read the room** – What are the group dynamics? What does the group need? Do they need something explained/clarified? Do they need a break? Do they need a clearer proposal or simpler question? Do they need to focus? Is there tension that needs to be addressed? Do they need to move faster/slower? Do they need to explore this fun tangent for a moment?
- **Summarize** – Listen to what people are saying. When there is a lull or confusion step in to summarize what you’ve heard. This can clarify where people agree and disagree and make the rest of the discussion easier.
- **Ask permission** – Everything you do is with the consent of the group. Ask permission frequently to remind everyone that they are in control. “Shall we move on to the next topic?” “How about we focus on this question first?”

- Help each person feel heard – Use paraphrasing, scribing (writing stuff up front where everyone can see it), summarizing, and other methods to reflect back what people are saying.
- Be impartial – Ideally a facilitator should be completely impartial and just serve to facilitate the group, though that is not always practical. If you must give content (opinions, solutions, answers to questions, how you feel about a proposal, input), label it as clearly separate from your facilitation role, verbally place yourself last on stack, and be brief. If you realize your feelings on an issue cloud your ability to continue facilitating, you may pass on the duties to someone else (let the group know that this is what you're doing).
- Agendas can be really helpful – depending on the type of circle you're facilitating. if the circle has a specific goal, its easy to make an agenda quickly.
- One discussion at a time – Keep to one topic at a time and finish it before moving on. Break up complicated discussion into multiple smaller ones if needed.
- Frequent temperature checks – Frequent, quick temperature checks for big and small decisions ensure that everyone is on the same page and welcomes even slight hesitations that can end up being valuable concerns.
- Be open about your needs – You're a person with needs too. Don't hesitate to say if you need a short break or if you need someone to take over facilitating (for whatever reason).
- Ask for feedback – We're always learning and growing. Asking for honest feedback at the end of the meeting is the best way to improve.

Stack

Stack is a set of hand signals that helps keep order for when people want to speak without interrupting one another, let's people express their thoughts or feelings without having to speak, and can also help structure and focus the conversation. The facilitator often keeps track of stack (or that can be a specific role).

Progressive stacking can be used to give marginalized groups, voices that are often submerged, discounted, or excluded, and those with lived experience a greater chance to speak by placing them before those on stack without lived experience or who have already spoken.

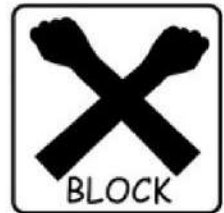
- To get on **Stack** raise one hand and look to the stacker (facilitator) to confirm your addition to stack. You will be called in the order you were added.
- **Clarifying question** is a single hand formed in the shape of a C. This shows one has a question necessary to clarify what was just said. *This symbol jumps stack and should not be misused.*
- **Direct response** is both hands moving alternately front to back. This shows you have something that must be said after the person speaking, usually for clarity's sake. *This symbol jumps stack and should not be misused.*
- **Point of process** is a triangle formed by two hand. This sign shows one has an idea for how to improve meeting process. *This symbol jumps stack and should not be misused.*

The following can be used in response to something being said and can also to get a “temperature check” on a topic/proposal being discussed:

- **Up twinkles** are both hands raised with fingers pointing up and being wiggled. Twinkles indicates agreement, with what is being said or with a consensus proposal. They are borrowed with gratitude from ASL’s word for applause, so that listeners can show enthusiasm without interrupting the speaker.
- **Flat hands** means that you are unsure, not for, or not against. One may be asked to clarify one’s position.
- **Down twinkles** are arms raised but with fingers pointing down and wiggling. Down twinkles indicate disagreement with what is being said. One may be asked to clarify one’s objection.
- **Hard block** is holding arms up and crossed. This indicates a firm opposition to the proposal. This signifies the that the approval of the proposal goes against the interests or principles of the group.

All participants are responsible for a creative, healthy meeting environment:

- **Time** is pointing to your wrist. This reminds group to be aware of the time.
- **Re-centering Llama** is a hand raised with the index and pinkie fingers raised and the remaining fingers making contact in the center, like a long llama nose. This sign shows that the discussions has strayed from the original topic and gently refocuses the group.
- **Vibes Watch** is two “v” hands coming together to make a “w”. Signals that things are getting tense. Suggests the group address the tension and/or take a break.



Handling Disagreements and Conflict

Conflict is natural in any group. A facilitator can help conflict be healthy and lead to stronger connections and decisions.

Preventing conflict:

- Encouraging a healthy culture where participants are actively listening in an attempt to understand each other before jumping to conclusions or judgment.
- Clarifying or summarizing people's positions so that it is not misinterpreted by another member can be helpful (especially in tense or tough discussions).

Once a disagreement has arisen:

- A facilitator should use their judgment to determine the level of intervention (if any). This intervention should vary depending on the severity and atmosphere of the conflict as well as the overall group norms for conflict navigation.
- Remind the group that disagreement is natural and that this is all part of the process.
- Mention areas of common ground and clearly state where the areas of disagreement are so participants are clear about what is being discussed.

- If disagreement seems to be based on personal preferences, try inviting people to look to the group mission or principles to see what to align to.
- Try to find the fear(s) or worry underneath the disagreement and address that.
- If things continue to escalate, simply naming that conflict or tension has arisen can do a lot to de-escalate things. It allows a space for participants to step back and observe. Offer to take a short break.
- If it gets personal insist on at least a short break.
- Time is the facilitators ally. If you feel that a conversation or decision is not going to be resolved you can suggest to defer the conversation or decision to a later time. This will give the team members a chance to cool off and think about the topic in more depth. You can also use the break time to communicate with the people in conflict individually in order to better understand their position and make the individuals feel heard and considered.
- Finally you can suggest participants utilize the event's mediation team to resolve the issue.

ADDRESSING PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR IN MEETING

At public meeting there may be people attending who don't have other outlets to talk with people about radical ideas and they may not have experience working in facilitated spaces. These practices help us all to keep our meetings a safe space and keep us accountable to our norms.

Behavior	Technique	Something to say could be...
Ignoring stack	Enforce process agreements	"We're using stack to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard. A reminder that [person] has the floor now, and then [person]."
Talking over others, taking up a lot of space	Maintain/regain focus "Parking lot" Interrupt and make space for others	"I need to stop you here so we can stay on the agenda. There will be time to talk at break or after the gathering." "Does it pertain to the current agenda item? If not, we really do need to move on." "This isn't an appropriate time to delve into that conversation. We could add it to an agenda for a future meeting if you'd like?" "I've notice that you've had a lot to say today, so I'm going to ask that you wait until others have had a chance to contribute."
Subtle bigotry	Protect others from personal attack Call out the behavior	"That language is offensive and disrespectful, and it is not welcome in this space." "It sounds like you're [blaming, shaming, targeting]. Please be more mindful of the words you're using." "You are continuing to use language that is harmful, and it is not okay. You can choose to stop or leave."
Privileged fragility	Say what's going on Deal with it or defer	"I hear that you're feeling [unheard, uncomfortable, confused, whatever], and want feedback and affirmation. We do not have the time to give you what you want right now." "You were asked to step back because it is disruptive to the group." "Would you be willing to sit with how you feel for 10 minutes and see if anything changes for you?" "Would it be helpful to check in one-on-one with someone after the meeting?"
No security culture	Call in security culture norms	"This kind of conversation can put you or our comrades at risk." "For my own safety, I'd prefer conversations about illegal actions happen away from this meeting space."

Conflict Resolution Principles

- We engage to the best of our ability to resolve conflict, and seek help when needed.
- We resolve conflicts as close as possible to the people involved. Begin with the people directly involved, and expand from there as needed.
- We have mutual responsibility and care for each other. We act in good faith and work to be constructive, empathetic, and honest. We resolve conflicts with both our individual needs and the needs of the collective in mind.
 - We view each other through the “Green Lens”:
 - This person is a hero, whole and complete
 - They have goals, dreams, and a desire to make a difference
 - They have their own answers
 - They are contributing to me right now
 - They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect
- Disagreements can inspire discussion and learning. However, if a disagreement is blocking progress, is hurtful, or is harmful, then a resolution needs to be found.
- Resolution means the parties involved feel heard, the agreed outcome or change is clear, and normal activity is possible. If a conflict continues to negatively impact an individual or the group, it is not resolved.

Before the Conversation

There are some things you can do in advance to set yourselves up for success.

Check in with everyone – It's good to check in with everyone in advance to make sure they're comfortable with you supporting their conversation and ask them if there is anything they'd like you to know in advance. You don't want to get too deep into either side of the story, but a basic overview can be helpful.

Establish norms and expectations – Let them know your process for the conversation (maybe even send them this guide), ask them norms they want, ask them what they want from you, and/or ask them to share or think about their goals for the conversation. (See “Starting the Conversation” for more details.)

Write letters or notes – Some people process or express themselves better in writing. You could suggest that everyone write letters to each other in advance. These could be sent to everyone or just to you. Or they could just write notes to remind themselves of things they want to say. It can be very helpful to write things down because it's easy to forget once things get emotional (this is especially helpful if anyone involved is conflict avoidant or more passive.)

Ask those involved what they think would be best and use your judgment.

Starting the Conversation

Just the presence of a supportive 3rd party can be a huge help and allow people to feel more open and safe. Helping to start the conversation off well is an important part of that.

Welcome – Thank and acknowledge them for being here to address this conflict. Let them know the steps you're going to take to open the space and how you'll support them throughout.

Grounding / Presence – Ask if there's anything anyone wants to do or say first to shed the outside stress of the day and be more present.

Set Norms – Start off reviewing the conflict resolution principles above and other group norms for communication. Ask if there are any norms they'd like to be present for this conversation. (This could also be done before the meeting, but it's good to re-iterate as the beginning of the conversation either way.)

Ask what they want out of the conversation – It's good to establish at the beginning what each person's expectations and goals are. Examples: Feeling heard, apologies, understanding the other person, developing better communication for the future, etc. Maybe write them down. (This could also be done before the meeting, but it's good to re-iterate as the beginning of the conversation either way.)

Ask if there's anything in particular they want from you as mediator – They could express how much or little they want you to intervene. Let them know they're in control of the process. (This could also be done before the meeting, but it's good to re-iterate as the beginning of the conversation either way.)

When to Intervene

Most of the time you'll just be listening. You only need to intervene if they're not making progress on their own, or if you see a potential way to be supportive:

Escalation – If things are getting heated without being productive and are continuing to escalate you need to step in. This is why you're there.

Potential misunderstanding – If you notice a potential misunderstanding it could be good to jump in and make sure they are both clear. Often people can be using the same word or phrase to mean very different things.

Talking in circles – If you notice them talking about the same things over again or jumping from topic to topic without any resolution they could be stuck and need some help.

Interruptions – If they are interrupting each other it could be good to remind them to listen. It's important they have space to get things out and to be heard.

Long silence – Some silence is good, but if there's a long silence you may need to step in to prompt dialogue.

Meaningful looks – If someone gives you a meaningful look it could be a subtle ask for assistance.

Potential Interventions

There are a lot of ways you could intervene. Here are a few suggestions:

Take a breath – If things are getting really heated a breath or a short break can be good.

Restate what you're hearing – Summarize what you're hearing. This helps give some distance and space to reflect and clarify.

Ask them to say what they're hearing the other person say – This helps clear up potential misunderstandings.
Suggest a process – You can suggest a way forward. This is especially good if they're stuck or talking in circles.
Maybe breaking down the conflict into different topics to be addressed one at a time.

Ask if they're willing to resolve the conflict – If they're really getting nowhere ask if they're both willing or ready to resolve the conflict (doesn't mean that they have to do it immediately or know how to, just if they are willing to). It can be useful to take a step back and for all parties to reflect on where they're at. The truthful answer may be no, which is good to know and may mean you need to come back to this later.

Closing

As much as you can, make sure that everything is truly resolved. Talking through conflict is uncomfortable and people may want to just be done even if things aren't resolved.

Ask if everything is now resolved – Any nagging things you want to get out? Anything else you want to say?

Ask if they have received what they wanted out of the conversation – Reflect back to the beginning. Did we accomplish what we set out to do?

Next steps – What else needs to be done? Future conversations? What can be put in place for the future? Better ways to communicate, support systems, new norms, etc.

Acknowledge them – It's not easy to proactively address conflict. Acknowledge them for what they brought to the conversation (vulnerability, courage, compassion, openness, etc.). Potentially ask them to acknowledge each other. After an emotional conversation it can be nice for everyone to remember why they like each other in the first place.

Follow up – Consider following up a week or month afterward to see how things are going. Thank you for supporting others to resolve conflict! It is vitally important work.

Deescalation Quick Guide

Be empathic and nonjudgmental. Whether or not you think those feelings are justified, they're real to the other person.

Respect personal space. If possible, stand 1.5 to three feet away. Use nonthreatening non-verbals. Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.

Remain calm, rational, and mindful. How you respond will have a direct effect on whether the situation escalates or defuses.

Focus on feelings. Facts are important, but how a person feels is the heart of the matter. Watch and listen carefully for the person's real message.

Redirect confrontational questions. Answering often results in a power struggle. When a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand.

Set boundaries. Redirect behavior with clear, simple, and enforceable boundaries. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences.

Choose wisely what you insist upon. It's important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not.

Allow silence for reflection. It can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening, and how they want or need to proceed.

Allow time for decisions. When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly.

Give them a few moments to think through what's been said and how to proceed.

How do we bring our best self to this work?

It is important to arrive well rested, fed, hydrated, and self-aware.

Take some time before the start to ensure you are present.

Get ready to put your phone away. Drink coffee. Breathe for a moment. Being present with who you are interacting with is important. You want the person to know that listening is your priority. Let the others know where you are at mentally and physically. Some days you won't be able to support others emotionally, and that's ok!

Be aware of what things make you feel more stressed, such as loud voices, certain characteristics, addiction, or escalated situations. If you find yourself in a situation where you don't feel comfortable, be quick to ask for help from someone else.

One of the best gifts you can give is to hold space for someone, to listen compassionately.

When someone shares with you something intense from their lives, validate their experience. You can say "That must have been really difficult for you" or "Thank you so much for telling me". People don't need solutions or answers as much as compassion.

Be sincere, respectful, and honest. Respect breeds respect.

Have confidence in yourself. You will not always say the "right" thing. People can feel if you are interacting with kindness and respect and their connection with you will grow. Rapport is organic and is nurtured in every moment. People are going to remember how you make them feel, not what you say.

Trauma informed care

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) is a structure and attitude that emphasizes understanding, compassion, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma Informed Care also looks at physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone in the space, and provides tools to empower folks on the pathway to stability.

Becoming “trauma-informed” means recognizing that people have many different traumatic experiences which often intersect in their lives. Well-meaning people can re-traumatize guests who need understanding, support, and individually-conscious care. Seek support if you feel you are unsure of how to respond calmly to a guest.

Keep power dynamics in mind.

You are in a position of power as a participant. Minimize that feeling as much as you can by being aware of body language, the geography of the scene (Do they have an open exit? Do you? Can you move to a more relaxed place?), and ensuring that you engage with the guests with respect and with a calm tone of voice.

Body language: how you look and sound to others

Physical

- Keep in mind that we are animals first, and we are looking to body language to identify friend or foe.
- Open arms, relax legs, turn slightly (be aware of where you are facing, stay open if you can), keep hands visible (helps with paranoia), and be aware of too much eye contact (match the person's comfort level.)
- Where is your eye level compared to theirs? Meet them at their level when you can. Crouch down if they are beneath you. Don't tower over someone!
- Stay able to move quickly, but get comfortable.
- Give appearance that you have time to talk with them. Casual & connective.
- Body language should send the same message that your words are trying to send.

Tone

- Sincerity and calmness are important.
- If someone is upset and don't seem like they are hearing you, tone can help them begin to hear your meaning before they are able to fully follow.
- Someone shouting? You can try amplifying yourself initially and slowly lowering your voice, and they could mirror you and slowly lower as well.
 - "I want to hear you, but it is hard at this volume."
 - They could be stuck at that energy level and need help coming out.
 - "I hear that there is something going on (loud), I want to help (lower), let's go over here and talk (regular volume)."

Touch

- **DO NOT ASSUME YOU CAN TOUCH ANYONE.** Get consent first by offering touch, verbally and explicitly, every time. What is ok in one moment may have changed in the next.

Medical

If you see something that seems medically concerning, let an organizer know.

- Always wear gloves when there is any possibility of contamination.
 - How to remove gloves without contaminating yourself: Pinch cuff of 1st glove and slowly remove. Ball in remaining gloved hand
 - Remove second glove by slipping clean finger under glove and turn glove inside out when sliding off.

Seizures

- Clear space around person and put soft things around them
- Put them on side if possible
- **DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN THEIR MOUTH OR RESTRAIN THE PERSON**

Sharps

- Stay with sharp and ask someone else to go get the sharps container
- Set sharps container next to sharp on ground
- Wearing gloves, pick up sharp and place in container, always moving away from body

Wound Care

Always remain in your comfort zone when helping people. If it is beyond your comfort, ask for support and contact a medical professional.

Grab a Buddy when Deescalation is Necessary

- Grab a buddy to come with you, or at least stay in the sight of someone who knows what is going on.
- You may need support or to tag out if:
 - You could trigger someone for reasons out of your control. Eg, you look or sound similar to someone they have trauma around.
 - You end up feeling triggered, uncomfortable, offended, or emotionally sensitive.
- Respect the “tap out”
 - It is often easier to see situations clearly from the outside of it.
 - If your buddy is triggering the other person(s) or perhaps is becoming emotionally reactive themselves, tap them on the shoulder and say “Hey, I got this.”
 - When tapped, respect the feedback and offer of support, and step back.
 - Debrief after the situation is handled, have patience until then.

Do Not Run/Rush Into a Situation

- You might miss other things happening in the environment or physical barriers.
- You can increase the stress of the situation.
- You need to both appear and feel calm when you arrive.
 - If your heart rate is raised, so is your anxiety level.
- Pause to take a breath before engaging.
- Being centered and grounded inspires that same feeling around you.

Think About How You Can Be Most Helpful In Any Situation

- Are there other people already helping?
 - Don't create a crowd. Try to keep it to no more than 2 people helping directly.
 - Maybe your role will be to keep people out of the ruckus.
- Think about what tools and skills can you contribute and offer when appropriate.

Being Self-Aware

- It is alright not to be able to offer emotional support to others. Let others know where you're at and help guide them to someone who has stated they are able to offer that level of support.
- Think about what it feels like when you become anxious or uncomfortable. Listen to these as flags and seek support with the earliest signs you can identify.
- Everyone has buttons that can be pressed, try to get to know yours.
- Take time to reground yourself after engaging in an escalated situation.

Think about the Geography of the Scene.

- Have an easy, open exit for everyone.
 - They may feel trapped and be unable to relax and listen, even unconsciously.
- One tool in deescalation, often a “reset button”, is moving to a new area.
 - Invite the person to go for a walk, smoke, to get some food or water.
- Always let other volunteers know about any behaviors you encounter and try to deal with. Take someone with you or stay in sight of a mediation team member who is aware of the situation.

Redirecting Behavior

- Do not start with “you are doing this wrong”. Remove combative language.
- Use “I” statements.
 - Don’t declare what the other person is feeling, tell them what you are observing
 - This makes it difficult for someone to argue, it is your experience, not something they can object to easily.

- Be collaborative and try to problem solve
 - This helps you join and engage with them.
 - Remember they are the expert in their own lives. Offer any help that you think appropriate, but find out from them what support they need.
 - Help people access their own internal support, that fierce and confident inner voice, and help supply the external support
- If someone has a wound, or issue in general, ask if they want assistance and respect what they say.
- Ask if they have a friend around who can offer support.

Set Clear and Concise Boundaries

- Start with a positive, compassionate statement centered around them.
- Set a clear and concise boundary. “I need you to ...”
 - Remember to speak calmly and firmly. Explain your reasons why this is important, but remember to stay concise.
- Try to meet people where they are at. Compromise when able and stand strong when you must.
- End with another kind and compassionate statement. Thank them for helping you ensure the safety and comfort of everyone.

Handling Altered Realities

- Stay compassionate first. They will hear the tone of voice you use and will likely only be receptive to a respectful and kind approach.
- Do not debate reality with someone.
- Some people may make paranoid statements.
 - Do not lie & don't reaffirm their reality either.
 - If you say the conspiracy doesn't exist, you may become a threat to them too.
 - Instead, find and address the underlying emotional state/undertone
 - They are probably feeling fear or anxious.
 - Say "I would feel...", "that sounds hard", etc, and try to redirect.
 - Take people seriously and respect their emotional state.
 - "I believe you, and this is what I am experiencing."
- Avoid arguing with anyone!

Get to Know Who You are Interacting With

- Think about what that person's baseline might be and remember their baseline will be different than yours.
- Once you get to know someone, you can tell if certain behaviors are normal for them.
 - If something seems new or concerning, that is fair to mention. Both to the guest and to peacekeepers.
- Come from a desire to collaborate. Together you can brainstorm and figure out how to move forward.

LGBTQ2IA+, Gender and Sexuality Awareness

- LGBTQ2IA+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Two Spirit, Intersex, Asexual, plus.
 - An inclusive acronym that includes most sexual and gender identities.
- People who identify as other than cis-gendered (someone who's gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth) and/or heterosexual often experience trauma at even-higher rates.
- Asking someone the pronouns they use (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs) can help them feel seen and begin to build rapport and trust.
 - Show compassion and work to address people as they want to be addressed
- Do not assume gender based on appearance. Respect someone's self identification.
- Respect breeds respect. Remember to come from a place of compassion.

De-escalation is used to calm the other person down. It can create opportunities to leave a dangerous situation. De-escalation is a strategy used to increase your or someone else's safety. If you say something, it doesn't mean it is true or you fully believe it (for example, you can lie, or apologize for things you don't feel sorry about). It is just a tool. A key element of successful de-escalation is maintaining emotional self-control. It is critical that we don't make things worse because of our triggers – remember keeping yourself and others safe is where we want to center our energy.

- Make a connection. Ask non-threatening questions.
- Use “we” language – “let’s go over there.” “ Let’s talk about what’s happening.”
- Acknowledge their feelings – listen even if you don’t want to and don’t care.
- Be unresponsive to hostile energy directed at you.
- Give them options – put all options in the positive and only set limits you can enforce.
- Listen actively: let them know you understand their point of view and reflect it back so they know you heard them. Wait them out.
- Don’t shush them or tell them to calm down.
What escalates: blaming, shaming, humiliating, finger pointing, touching, ridiculing.

Non-verbals

Project confidence: Neutral expression.

Soft eye contact. Balanced posture.

Mirror Calm: BREATHE. Use minimal gestures.

Position Yourself for Safety:

- Stand on an angle, hands visible and with non-threatening body language
- Keep 2 arms' length distance at a bare minimum
- Be aware of escape routes for you and the agitated person. You don't want them to feel trapped or surrounded.
- Be aware of barriers, weapons

big thanks to these
comrades and teachers
for contributing to
this info share

- unconference.net
- coop4lib
- co-op center
- transitionnetwork.org
- facilitation for liberation
- neighborhood anarchist collective
- liberatingstructures.com
- aorta - anti-oppression resource & training alliance
- center for non-violent communication