

# effective norms for dialogue

linking community values to individual actions

## What it is

Norms are the principles guiding the behavior of the group, within the context of the dialogue(s) they will be having together.

## Why we do it

- Increases a sense of safety for participants by setting clear expectations.
- Helps the group self-regulate + hold one another accountable to collective values.

## How to do it

**Start with a set of 3-5 EFFECTIVE norms.**

**Facilitators can...**

- adapt pre-existing norms (test them against the criteria below).
- write a set of norms (see below).
- create norms as a group (see below).

**Communicate norms clearly.**

**Make sure everyone in the group...**

- understands the norms.
- has the ability to abide by the norms.
- agrees to the norms.

**Over the course of the dialogue(s):**

- Reiterate + reinforce norms regularly.
- Revise + supplement as needed.

## EFFECTIVE NORMS ARE. . .

### MEMORABLE

**Keep norms simple and short.**

One clause per norm. One action word. Five norms or fewer. People can't follow norms that they can't remember!

**BAD:** "Strive to practice deep and active listening and demonstrate it with your body language."

**GOOD:** "Embody listening."

### ACTIONABLE

**Make norms concrete.**

Words like "respect," "listen," "civil," "open-minded," etc., mean different things to different people. Identify the action(s) connected to the value. What does it *look like* to live out that value?

**BAD:** "Honor each other's humanity."

**GOOD:** "Use each other's names."

### ALIGNED

**Match norms to purpose.**

Think about what makes sense given the topic and structure of the dialogue(s) + participants' identities, experiences, culture(s), and values.

For example, "Everyone gets equal time to speak" might make sense for one topic/group, but not another.

### COLLABORATIVE

**Do norms together.**

Whether the group adopts existing norms or creates them together, they should be:

- universally understood
- unanimously agreed-to
- collectively recalled, revised, and reinforced over the course of the dialogue(s)