

Men's Group Expectations

I understand that participation in the Gay Men's Support Group will require me to respect certain standards to ensure that everyone's experience of the group is of the highest possible quality possible. Those expectations include:

1. CONFIDENTIALITY

Traditionally 'what is said in this room stays in this room', though we usually agree that we may discuss our own process and even refer to something that may be helpful to someone out of the group as 'something I saw on TV', or 'my friend said', etc. The important thing is that no one other than ourself can be identified!

2. RESPECT

Respect in this group means to listen to others when they speak, and be aware of how you are behaving. Treat others in a way you would expect to be treated by them. Respect of other people naturally follows on from self-respect, as lack of self-respect will reflect in lack of respect for others. Respect our own truth, boundaries, feelings, instincts and intuition.

3. TAKE PART

You get from the experience of being a group member what you put into it. Stretching yourself when you feel like being quiet can often be an important activity. Telling the truth and sharing our selves gives everyone else in the room safety and permission to do the same. Likewise, it would be better to authentically and honestly say "Pass" than to lie, perform, get into automatic-pilot banter or go into our heads and get out of touch with ourselves.

If something said by another, or something comes up that may feel uncomfortable, bring up anger, sadness, etc. it would probably be better to work this through with the group – or at least name it, instead of quietly holding on to it – rather than taking it away with you and allowing its power to overshadow you for however long it may take hold.

4. BE HONEST

Be honest to ourselves - about our feelings as well as our words – because that way we can own our feelings and work things through, rather than quietly internalize and carry it until we find an opportunity to dump it on someone else, within / outside the group.

5. OWN IT

Use "I" statements, rather than "you", "one" or "we". What is being said by you may not be true for all present but it's true for you and that's ok. Depersonalising is often a way of avoiding ownership of a feeling, an experience, opinion, or issue.

6. DON'T BULLY

Neither aggressive, nor passive-aggressive bullying is an option here. No one's safety is to be compromised. This is a space where people can learn how to challenge, or disagree with another person, clearly, honestly, honorably and with respect.

7. DON'T VAMP OR STEAL

When someone is telling their story, give them the space to express it from their experience, without projecting how good, bad or ugly it is; without jumping into / steering / boosting their drama; without upstaging them with a more dramatic story, so they can listen to their own words and choose how to work it through.

8. EXPERIMENT WITH WHO YOU ARE

You may be known as a joker, peacemaker, shy, confident, introvert, extrovert, whatever personalities your circles are used to. This space encourages us to experiment with allowing some of the quiet parts inside to come out and see how authentic they feel; with the option of asking for feedback.

9. RESPECT BOUNDARIES OF RELATIONSHIPS

Group members may decide to meet or communicate outside of the group setting. It's important, though, to recognize that these meetings will likely affect relationships with other group members who won't be part of those conversations or interactions. Additionally, discussing other group members who are not present is not healthy and should be avoided. Under no circumstances is it acceptable for active group members to have any physical or sexual relationship with another group member as this creates a dynamic which is not intended to be part of the group experience.

Though the group facilitator will assist in maintenance of these standards and expectations, I understand that each member of the group has the responsibility to both operate within these agreements as well as hold others accountable for them.

My signature below indicates that I have read and agree with the expectations stated in this document.

Name

Date