



Safer Space Guidelines

What is a safer space?

A safer space is a supportive, non-threatening environment where all participants can feel comfortable to express themselves and share experiences without fear of discrimination or reprisal. We use the word safer to acknowledge that safety is relative: not everyone feels safe under the same conditions. By acknowledging the experiences of each person in the room, we hope to create as safe an environment as possible.

Creating a safer space is especially important when dealing with equity, diversity and inclusion issues, which can be a sensitive area for people and can involve deeply personal or traumatic experiences.

Why do we need guidelines?

In an ideal world all spaces would be safer spaces, and all people would consider others and protect each other's sense of safety. But, despite our best intentions, sometimes we are either unaware of certain issues or have inconsiderate moments. Having clear guidelines encourages mindfulness about these possibilities. While slip-ups may occur, they keep us on the same page.

The guidelines

1. Respect others' physical and emotional boundaries.
2. Consent. We use the pronouns and names people ask us to use. Respect others' identities and backgrounds, including pronouns and names.
3. Do not assume or make judgments on anyone's gender identity, sexual preference, survivor status, health status, economic status, religion, background, beliefs, opinions, etc.
4. Confidentiality. What is shared in the session, stays in the session. Respect others' right to privacy both during this dialogue and beyond. Do not push anyone to answer questions they don't want to answer, and do not share anyone's personal stories outside of this dialogue. Assist in protecting the confidentiality of others by using headphones.



5. Be aware that your actions and words may have unintended effects on other people and that their feelings are valid, regardless of your intentions.
6. Avoid raising your voice, interrupting or talking over anyone else. And be aware of how much you're participating — make sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
7. Assume positive intent. If someone does or says something that crosses a boundary, gently let them know, but do not assume they intended harm.
8. Remember, we are all learning.
9. Take care of your own safety. If you need to step out, feel free to do so. If you feel unsafe, let the facilitator know.
10. If you witness any abusive or inappropriate behaviour, let the facilitator know.

Adapted from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019 and The Valley Youth Project, 2020

IMPORTANT

What to do if someone discloses something that needs action?

Although confidentiality is a key element of our dialogue, there are exceptions. If someone expresses an intention or desire to harm themselves or someone else, you must act.

If the situation is urgent, call 911.

Contact Acadia Counselling for an appointment: counselling@acadiau.ca
Tel: 902.585.1246

Mental Health Emergencies

- Contact Acadia Safety & Security at 902.585.1103
- Go to Valley Regional Hospital or call 911
- Call NS Mental Health Crisis Line: 1.888.429.8167

Should you need crisis mental health counselling:

Nova Scotia Mental Health Crisis Line: 1-888-429-8167
First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help line: 1-855-242-3310