

Ground Rules for Continuing Courageous Conversations¹

1. Read aloud: Courageous conversations are dialogues in which participants commit to engage each other with honesty, open-mindedness, and vulnerability; to listen deeply to better understand each other's perspective; and to "sustain the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted"
2. The goal of Ground Rules for Continuing Courageous Conversations is to be able to have a conversation about race without excessive fear of being labeled racist, biased or bigoted, to avoid blaming or being blamed, and to avoid discounting or invalidating the experiences and feelings of others.

To that end, we agree to follow these ground rules:

Stay Engaged

Give yourself permission to focus fully on the conversation topic or exercise at hand. •

Please silence your cell phone. •

Share a story, state your opinion, ask a question—risk and grow!

Speak Your Truth

Value everyone's thoughts. •

Start by assuming good intentions. •

Speak from your own experience and use "I" statements, as in "I think", "I feel", "I believe", or "I want". 3 •

It's important that we create a safe environment where everyone is free to speak openly. •

Keep in mind that people are in different places in this work. In order for us to grow, people need to be able to share thoughts in a way that's comfortable for them

Be aware of non-verbal communication. •

Before speaking, think about what you want others to know. How can they best hear you? •

Mistakes are part of success. Don't be overly cautious about being politically correct – this is a learning process. •

Disagree respectfully.

Listen for Understanding

Listen without thinking about how you are going to respond. •

Try to understand where another person is coming from as best you can. •

Be careful not to compare your experiences with another person's. This often invalidates or minimizes a person's experiences. •

If someone is pointing out how what you said left them feeling, try not to explain or rationalize what you said or why you said it. Sometimes positive intent is not enough. Sometimes it's

¹ Sources: Race: The Power of an Illusion Learning Exchange; www.culturesconnecting.com; Singleton (2006) Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools 1st ed.

necessary to just say, “I didn’t realize what I said was inappropriate...or hurt you in that way, I’m sorry,” etc.

Be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Honor Confidentiality

What is shared here, stays here.

Expect and Accept Non-closure

Engaging in race conversations is ongoing work that does not necessarily leave a person walking away feeling everything turned out the way they hoped. Accept that much of this is about changing yourself, not others.

Responsibility to Each Other and to the Courageous Conversation Process •

Group members will encourage each other to follow the ground rules. Additional Ground Rules Agreed to by the Group (optional) •

Participants are invited to propose additional ground rules for courageous conversations. The group may wish to discuss before deciding whether they agree to abide by additional ground rules. If so, the additional ground rules should be written out for everyone to see.