

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 mental health issues, which can be a sensitive area for people and 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

Adopt these guidelines as they are or adapt them to the needs of your group. Feel free to ask participants whether they want to add anything to this list:

1. Respect others' physical and emotional boundaries.
2. 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. 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.
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.

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 take action.

Encourage the person to contact the nearest [distress centre](#) or do so on their behalf (with their consent). If you're on campus and student mental health resources are available, you can call on those as well.

If the situation is urgent, call 911.

You can also text HOME to 686868 in Canada to text with a trained Crisis Responder.

Public review and ongoing outreach

Another opportunity to contribute to the development of the Psychological Health and Safety for Post-Secondary Students Standard will occur during the public review process, planned for the period between August and October 2019.

Note: This information is being gathered for the express purpose of supporting development of the CSA Z2003 Psychological Health and Safety for Post-Secondary Students Standard. After the MHCC receives your report, it will deliver it as written to CSA's technical committee (more specifically, the CSA resource development team) for review and analysis in support of the Standard's development.

Thank you for all your time and effort!

Please [forward](#) your completed forms to Karyn Ferguson, CSA Technical Committee Project Manager at karyn.ferguson@csagroup.org and cc Polly Leonard, MHCC Program Manager at pleonard@mentalhealthcommission.ca.