

Full Circle Spirituality Group Agreements

(Adapted from the Boston Knapsack Anti-Racism Meetup Group and Guidelines for Multicultural Interactions at EBMC)

It is our intention at Full Circle Spirituality gatherings to provide true welcome: To welcome all parts of you and of our collective family. When I try to explain true welcome I often point to what it isn't, and this might be an experience you know well in your own way. Maybe you've joined a space where you wonder if you'll have to navigate around some part of you yet again.. Around your sexual orientation or gender expression, your race, your first language, around ability, nationality, class background, etc. As you can hear, the places where we don't feel welcome often occur around ways we are different than the dominant norms or identities in the space. So much of the experience of welcome, or lack thereof, is rooted in what is said, and what is not said, by those holding the space. We are committed to inclusion and welcome as an ongoing practice and we welcome your voice and feedback when we say things, or leave things out, that cause harm.

1. **Real talk:** Speak your truth, be real, speak from the heart.
2. **Try it on:** Be willing to “try on” new ideas, or ways of doing things that might not be what you prefer or are familiar with.
3. **Practice self focus:** Attend to and speak about your own experiences and responses. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.
4. **Move up/move back:** Encourage full participation by all present. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, consider “moving back” and vice versa. Extra awareness is needed for those from historically privileged and dominant cultures and identities.
5. **Hurt is expected and respected:** It's not possible for any of us to be perfect or to never cause harm. Intimacy includes bumping up against each other's tender places and blind spots and in so doing offers us a chance to widen in our awareness and to heal unconscious patterns. If anyone realizes they've said something that they wished they hadn't said, we are invited to express our regret in more detail or to simply say 'oops'. Similarly, if someone says something that we found offensive or hurtful, we are invited to give feedback, or to simply say “ouch” to jumpstart a conversation about what just happened. Also, these things need not happen in the moment - there is no 'statute of limitations' on our chance to repair/redo.
6. **Confidentiality:** Other people's stories are not ours to tell. If there is something you would like to repeat outside of the room, ask that person's permission before sharing.
7. **Lean into discomfort:** It's not possible to explore issues connected with generations of pain without encountering discomfort. When that happens, avoid the impulse to change the subject or placate. Try to turn towards the discomfort rather than turn away.
8. **We Bring Attention to Impact as well as Intent:** Intent is important, and its also important to try to understand and acknowledge impact in addition to intent. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.
9. **Practice Both/And:** When speaking, substitute “and” for “but.” This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities.