

GROUP AGREEMENTS AND HOW TO CREATE THEM

For Educators/Facilitators



The purpose for group agreements is to establish a code of behaviour for the group, so that every person feels safe and can trust other group members. Group agreements use a 'tried and true' discussion procedure to achieve consensus for expectations, behaviour and communication during the education session. These manage peoples' expectations of the education session and their role in it.

Guidelines for groups learning from older people/guest speaker

Whether or not you have group agreements in place for discussions, it is recommended that specific group agreements be negotiated for discussions with the older people. Educators can use group agreements to:

- maximise learning;
- create a 'safe space' for learning with and from the older person;
- plan appropriate ways to respond when the agreements are broken.

Keep in mind

- The older person is the expert in their life, their body, their story.
- Older people may not be familiar with technology and the iPhone culture. (They may not appreciate learners using phones when they are speaking).
- Current fashion trends may be offensive to the values of older people.
- Pronunciation and accents may be difficult to interpret/understand for older people.
- Volume, pitch, speed of speech should be considered.
- Cultural responsiveness and potential sensitivities.
- Older people may feel intimidated by, or inferior to health professionals (including those 'in training').
- Respectfully listening with one person speaking at a time.

How to create group agreements

Before the session

- Creating group agreements should be done after gaining background information with the older person participating in the education session.
- This procedure could be done two or three sessions prior, NOT immediately before the session.
- Group agreements should be written down or typed and posted/projected during the session as a constant reminder to all participants.

Procedure

- After informing the learners that an older person will be guest speaking at a specific education session, initiate a discussion with learners to establish group agreements. Tell them the purpose of the agreements and that everyone must agree.
- Ask for 'ground rule' suggestions based on their knowledge of older people.
- Emphasise privacy and confidentiality for BOTH learners and older people (what's said in the session; stays in the session).
- Write the statements with positive language. (We agree to: or We will...).
- Discussion continues until there is consensus of the group.

Example agreements

We agree that everyone in the group will:

- refrain from posting on social media of the older persons', voice, image, names or stories, or verbally repeating to others;
- listen actively and attentively;
- show appreciation and give compliments as appropriate;
- behave politely and respectfully towards others;
- acknowledge everyone's right to "no comment";
- take responsibility for their own learning and comfort;
- speak loudly and slowly;
- speak one at a time;
- wear a nametag;
- use the microphone;
- learn and have fun.