

Ground Rules for Antiracism Dialogues, Part 1

- Our primary commitment is to learn and achieve understanding from discussion facilitators, from each other, from materials, and from our work.
- We acknowledge that racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression exist.
- We acknowledge that one of the consequences of racism is the systematic misinformation we have been taught about all groups of people. (This is true for both dominant and dominated group members.)
- We will be held accountable for repeating misinformation after we have heard and learned otherwise.
- Victims are not to be blamed for their oppression.
- We assume that people will strive to do the best they can to participate in the dialogue process and to try to behave in an antiracist way.
- We will actively pursue opportunities to learn about all groups of people yet not enter or invade other's privacy when unwanted.
- We will not demean, devalue, or trivialize any other person or group for their experiences or perspectives.
- We have an obligation to challenge the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups.
- We agree to respect confidentiality when it is requested.

Part 2: Guidelines for Dialogue vs. Debate

DIALOGUE is the understanding of myself and others:

I listen with the view of wanting to understand.

I listen for strengths, so as to affirm and learn.

I speak for myself from my own understanding and experiences.

I ask questions to increase understanding.

I allow others to complete their communications.

I concentrate on others' words and feelings.

I accept others' experiences as real and valid for them.

I allow the expression of real feelings in me and in others, for their feelings are understanding and catharsis.

I honor silence.

DEBATE is the successful argument of my position over that of my opponent:

I listen with the view of countering what I hear.

I listen for weaknesses, so as to discount and devalue.

I speak based on my assumptions about others' position/motives.

I ask questions to trip or to confuse.

I interrupt or change the subject.

I focus on the point I want to make next.

I critique others' experiences as distorted or invalid.

I express my feelings to manipulate others and deny that their feelings are legitimate.

I use silence to gain advantage.