

THE WAYS WE WANT OUR GROUP TO BE

This exercise is designed to help you create an agreement about how you want your group to be. How do you want to be treated? How do you want to communicate? How do you want to have people participate? How do you want to solve problems?

Activity 1: Read this list of possible agreements. Check the ones that YOU would REALLY agree to in THIS group.

So that we can have a group where *everyone feels safe, where everyone participates, and where we get accomplish something valuable*, we agree:

- _____ to be on time.
- _____ to try to get to know everyone.
- _____ to listen to other people with respect so that no one is afraid to speak.
- _____ to put other people “up,” not “down.”
- _____ to try new activities, even if they feel a little uncomfortable at first.
- _____ to switch partners without complaining.
- _____ to suggest ideas for new activities.
- _____ to ask for help when I need it.
- _____ to face problems when they come up and to try to solve them.

Activity 2: Students write additional agreements they would be willing to make. They don't discuss them and add them to the above list.

Activity 3: Teacher/facilitator surveys the group to find out how many people accept the suggested agreements. An activity that has participants move silently to “Agree,” “Thinking About It,” “Disagree” positions is often helpful.

Activity 4: Teacher/facilitator organizes students into groups of four to discuss why they accept or do not accept each suggested agreement.

Activity 5: Teacher/facilitator leads a whole group discussion in which individuals state their reasons for agreement or disagreement. It is important to frame this as a discussion, not a debate, and to maintain a tone of respect.

Activity 5: Teacher/facilitator determines the support for each proposed agreement, working towards consensus. Consensus means, “I accept the agreement and will not break it, even if it's not very important to me.” If there is no consensus on a proposed agreement, it can remain on the list and *individuals can choose to keep that agreement*.

Activity 6: Reflect on the agreement regularly. Use these guidelines:

- The agreement is a living document. It can change.
- Its purpose is to help us to treat each other well, to participate actively, to communicate clearly, and to solve problems. Its purpose is not to punish each other.
- Ask “How am I doing with the agreement? What is an example of how I am keeping the agreement? What agreements are hard for me to keep? What support will I accept to help me keep the agreements? How are we doing as a

group? Are these agreements helping us? What new agreements do we need to consider?