

A FEW GUIDELINES THAT ENHANCE DISCUSSIONS

These are SUGGESTIONS, not rules. Notice as time goes by, how people react to one another when a guideline is followed well, and what happens to the conversation when a guideline is ignored.

- ❖ Personal experience (yours) when shared, is valuable and valid. We may differ in our interpretations of what “really” occurred or what it “really” meant, but an individual speaking about self should not be dismissed or argued with.
- ❖ Specific examples tend to be helpful. Hypothetical examples and generalizations usually (not always) take us away from the meanings that connect our lives.
- ❖ When making generalizations., it is very helpful to indicate that you are doing so. “If X is true, it seems to me that: Or “In general,” Words like “always,” “never,” and “everyone” and other hyperbole add drama but often are received with skepticism.
- ❖ When reporting data not your own, try to acknowledge where it came from. “I read in Newsweek” Making assertions can open arguments about accuracy and authority instead of content and meaning.
- ❖ If one or two people seem to be dominating the discussion, ask one of the quieter members whether any of this resonates with them. Then let them talk... if they wish. Don't put people on the spot frequently, if listening is what they would rather do.
- ❖ Describing your own feelings is one valid and important way to participate. Avoid “mind-reading.” others' feelings or motivations..
- ❖ As a way of respecting one another, before giving advice or solving another's problem, ask if that is what they are looking for. Freely given may be freely rejected.
- ❖ Be willing to disagree with others, out of such discussions, new truth is sometimes uncovered. But try to do it with respect, even with curiosity and good humor.
- ❖ If you strongly disagree with another, shoot at their data or their interpretation, but not at their identity, or motivation, or soul. Own your own perceptions and feelings. Ask yourself what values of yours got triggered.