

Respectful Communication and Mutual Invitation

These guidelines are based on the work of Eric H. F. Law, Episcopal priest and founder of the Kaleidoscope Institute. His thoughts regarding mindful listening and thoughtful speaking are outlined in his book, *The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multi-Cultural Community*; 1993; Chalice Press

Respectful Communication Guidelines

R	Take responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others.
E	Listen with empathy
S	Be sensitive to differences in communication styles
P	Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak
E	Examine your own assumptions and presumptions
C	Keep confidentiality
T	Trust ambiguity because we are not here to decide who is right or wrong

Responsibility: Use "I" statements. What you have to share is important, but it is yours. In some cultures, "I" is rude; "we" is polite. If that is your culture, explain your use of "we".

Empathetic listening: Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Ask others to explain. Listen patiently. Don't judge each other for not knowing.

Sensitive: Be aware of the ways that people speak and listen. Why does someone sit silent for long stretches? Think before you speak, give the introverts a chance... count to 10.

Ponder: Examine your own thoughts, feelings. Think about what makes you feel the way you feel and then be careful to express it, such as , "when I hear that word, I feel...."

Examine: Know why you think/feel, then express.

Confidentiality: Uphold the well-being of the community being formed and the communities from which we come. Secrets harm community; confidentiality protects it.

Trust: Discern what to share and always tell the truth.

When engaged in a conversation:

- If you do not understand, ask for things to be re-stated.
- Do not use the guidelines to exclude people, but to aid in understanding.
- When necessary, take a break to give people time to think, ponder, reflect...

Mutual Invitation: The Process

Objective:	To facilitate sharing and discussion.
Setting:	Participants should sit in a circle or gather around a table.
Materials:	Copies of material to be discussed and/or questions for discussion.
Time:	<i>unknown at this time</i>

To Proceed: The leader or other designated person will speak first. After that person has spoken, he or she will invite another person to share. The person invited can be anywhere in the circle. After this person has shared, she or he has the privilege of inviting another to share. When someone is invited but does not want to share, simply say, "pass" and invite another to share. Continue until all have had the opportunity to share.

(Eric H. F. Law; *The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb*; pp. 92, 93)