

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNICATION AGREEMENTS

We are committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Practicing these agreements together can show us the ways that cultural conditioning manifests through our speech and interaction, and can help us begin to heal.

These agreements have their basis in long traditions of anti-racism and gender equity work.

This current version is adapted by San Francisco Zen Center from the “Agreements for Multi-Cultural Interactions at EBMC” practiced by the East Bay Meditation Center, which was in turn adapted from Visions, Inc. “Guidelines for Productive Work Sessions.”

“TRY IT ON” – Be willing to “try on” new ideas or ways of doing things that might not be what you prefer or are familiar with.

PRACTICE SELF FOCUS – Attend to and speak about your own experiences and responses. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTENT AND IMPACT – Try to understand and acknowledge impact. Denying the impact of something said by focusing on intent is often more destructive than the initial interaction.

PRACTICE “BOTH/AND” – When speaking, substitute “and” for “but.” This practice acknowledges and honors multiple realities.

REFRAIN FROM BLAMING OR SHAMING SELF & OTHERS – Practice giving skillful feedback.

MOVE UP/MOVE BACK – Encourage full participation by all present. Take note of who is speaking and who is not. If you tend to speak often, consider “moving back” and vice versa.

PRACTICE MINDFUL LISTENING – Try to avoid planning what you’ll say as you listen to others. Be willing to be surprised, to learn something new. Listen with your whole self.

CONFIDENTIALITY – Take home learnings but don’t identify anyone other than yourself, now or later. If you want to follow up with anyone regarding something they have said, ask first and respect their wishes.

RIGHT TO PASS – In group discussions, you can say “I pass” if you don’t wish to speak.