

Making Safer Spaces

1. We welcome you in the fullness of who you are and invite you to both presume and extend welcome to others, as well. It is almost always challenging, in one way or another, to be part of a group. Good news: there is no “inside” and no “outside” to this group! Be aware, though, of such sensitivities in ourselves and in each other.
2. Respect difference. Notice judgment, and practice experiencing it with compassion rather than conviction. (Remind yourself that other people are not failed attempts at being you! Remind yourself that you are not a failed attempt at being anyone else!) Cultivate curiosity.
3. Know that there is genuine freedom in this program. Every invitation to speak and participate is just that: an invitation. Passing or staying quiet is perfectly acceptable. You know best what you need.
4. Honor time. Please come on time to live sessions and to your *chevruta* meetings, ready to begin together and stay until the end. We know that occasionally life intervenes requiring some flexibility, but we ask that these be exceptions, not the norm. Please respect the time limits that are set for sharing. We also commit to sharing ‘airtime,’ ensuring that all participants who wish to speak are encouraged to and that no one monopolizes discussion time.
5. We do not engage in “fixing, advising, saving or correcting” (Parker Palmer). Each of us is here to refine our ability to listen to the still, small voice inside. Trust that we will each find our own way.
6. When in a group, give your full attention to the person speaking. Do not engage in side conversations. You can trust and learn from silence, as well. Use “I” statements when speaking, referring to your personal experience rather than making sweeping generalizations. Be mindful about the space you are taking. We acknowledge that different people have been given different access to space and voice and we encourage you to make space for all voices.
7. Each person commits to deep confidentiality; not speaking to anyone outside the group about what is shared and also not raising a vulnerable issue again with a group member at a later time, without the invitation of the person in question.
8. To assure each participant that they have the opportunity to know directly their own experience, we each commit to respecting each other’s boundaries in all areas, including the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Further, IJS courses are inappropriate settings to initiate any new romantic or sexual relationships. Commenting on another’s appearance, sexually or emotionally suggestive remarks and the like - shared verbally or by chat - undermine our safety, and will not be tolerated. We commit – staff and participants – to these limits for the sake of our shared wellbeing.