

« Creating a brave and welcoming learning space »

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TAGS (3 categorizations)

Is this activity focusing on one of the 3 steps of the method or tackling a transversal challenge facilitators may face?	Step of the method	NO	Decentering	Discovery of the frames of references of the other	Negotiation
	Challenge treated	NO			
	Sensitive zone treated	YES	Status		

Small Description

Please explain in a short paragraph (using grammatically correct full sentences) what your activity is about, why did you create it?

The aim of this activity is to establish together ground rules that will allow participants to interact relatively safely, while authorizing themselves to ask and discuss together the questions that matter for them. A key challenge is to establish rules that will allow as open a dialogue as possible while not putting members of minorities in difficult situations. The need to construct such guidelines depend on two main factors: the potential sensitivity of the subject that you will treat and the length of the training. For shorter sessions tackling sensitive topics we recommend that you still propose some framework but not spend on it a long time.

Quick info

TIME FRAME
30-60min

GROUP SIZE
2-10

FACILITATION LVL
Beginner

COMFORT ZONE
Safe

MATERIALS
Pen and paper
or a
computer/mobile
device.

15-20 min	5-18	intermediate	challenging	Paperboard, markers
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Preparations needed

Depending on the process of registration for the course, it may be interesting to check participants' needs and expectations concerning the learning environment.

Instructions Step By Step

Please give step by step instructions of your activity, including debriefing. Be direct, address the reader as a facilitator directly: eg. ask your participants to stand in a circle...

Step 1.

Tell participants that before starting the training we should take a moment to establish the rules of collaboration for our training. These rules should allow a rich and open learning environment while avoiding putting members of minorities in difficult situations. As some participants may be familiar with the concept and requirements of "safe space" it may be important to make it explicit, that the ground rules we are creating are not necessarily the rules of safe space. Propose participants the following questions:

- What ground rules should we establish?
- What will be the responsibility of the facilitator and the participants to keep those rules?

Step 2.

Start by the 1st question, collect contributions on a flipchart or smartboard so that everyone sees them. Once all contributions are collected, go through them together, checking which ones we need to ensure a good balance between openness and protection. Whenever it is unclear for participants what is the deeper meaning of a rule that is proposed, make it explicit. E.g. : what is the rationality of a rule asking to give priority to members of minorities who are directly concerned about a specific question.

If participants did not mention these aspects, you can propose them yourself:

- Confidentiality?
- Self-censorship: to what extent we should self-censor or dare to ask any question?
- Possibility to making mistakes and the consequences (what happens to the participant who commits what others perceive as a mistake)
- How to express disagreement, or if we feel that someone else's remark is "problematic"?
- What to do with emotional reactions, what is the importance and use we can give them?
- Is it possible or not to ask members of minorities to share their experiences as such (of course they can always decline answering, but is it possible even to ask?)

The concrete rules that are negotiated will depend on the group and the facilitator's preferences. Below are our own proposals, which should be adjusted according to the context.

- Confidentiality: we propose that what other participants say must remain in the training room but what facilitators say of course is not confidential.
- Self-censorship: we propose that questions are not self-censored, but that in their formulation we consider the impact they may have on others.
- Possibility of making mistakes and the consequences: we propose to allow us to make mistakes, as the fear of making mistakes can be very limiting. To make that possible we should not "punish" participants who make "mistakes" however, take note and analyse whenever a problem arises
- What to do with emotional reactions, what is the importance and use we can give them? We recommend using emotional reactions as indicators that point to important issues. However, emotional reactions are not to be considered as "evidence" pointing at the bad intention or insensitivity of the other person. It is rather pointing at the sensitivity of the person who experiences the emotion. Our mission will be to learn how we can use this information in a constructive manner.
- How to express disagreement, or if we feel that someone else's remark is "problematic"? We recommend taking note of it, expressing why we feel a remark is problematic, while avoiding the labeling of the person who made it.
- Is it possible or not to ask members of minorities to share their experiences as such (of course they can always decline answering, but is it possible even to ask?). Always must be based on consent.

Step 2.

Once we have our ground rules, ask whether everyone in the group can commit to them. Make adjustments if necessary.

Once agreed, we can go to the 2nd question, making explicit the role of the facilitator(s) and participants to keep the ground rules. For instance, participants may take responsibility for their own emotional reactions and the trainer can take responsibility to give space to tackle issues that triggered emotions and that could be useful for the collective learning.

Step 4.

Close the activity by telling participants that from now on you will work with these rules. However if it turns out we need new rules or change some rule, we can do that if the situation makes it necessary.



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Hints for the facilitator

There are many different conventions for setting guidelines in an intercultural training. It may be interesting to get familiar with those. We recommend reading our methodology paper ‘tackling status differences in MCE trainings’.

Ressources (Who invented this activity or who inspired it)

If you invented it, please write the name of your colleague and institution as you’d like it to be referenced

If you used ideas /activities of others please put full reference as concretely as you can