

CATHOLIC TEACHERS' **SAFER SPACES SERIES**

Reflection Tool Checklist for Safer Spaces

Below is a checklist that you can use to help you reflect on how to make any space a 'safer space'. This document is designed so that it can be used in various situations such as leading a meeting or in your classroom. Sections of this list may not be relevant, depending on your circumstances. The purpose of this checklist is to provide some support to assist you to create as safe a space as possible for people with whom you interact.

Invite members or students at the beginning of the course/year/class/meeting to negotiate and agree on the terms of their engagement with you and with other students/participants. It is important that you adapt the terms or group norms for use in your context, changing the language and selecting items that are suitable to the age and stage of the learners in front of you.

Some possible terms of engagement

- Remember, we are all learning.
- We will not discuss personal information revealed in the class/meeting, outside of the class/meeting.
- We are aware that our actions and words may have unintended effects on other people and that their feelings are valid, regardless of our intentions.
- If someone says that they find a particular word or phrase disrespectful, offensive, or abusive – respect that.
- If I find something disrespectful, offensive, or abusive, I will speak up.
- We will not use or threaten violence under any circumstances.
- We will not assume or make judgements on anyone's gender identity, sexual orientation, survivor status, health status, economic status, religion, background, beliefs, opinions, etc.
- I understand that somebody can be triggered by what I represent and that has nothing to do with me as a person.
- When we disagree with each other, we can express that disagreement respectfully by, for example, using "I" statements rather than "you" statements or generalizations.

- We will handle situations where we feel the conversation is being dominated by one person or perspective by:
 - gently telling the person one-on-one;
 - personally being aware of how much I am contributing and seeing if it is balanced with others; and/or
 - considering who would be in the best position to comment more on a particular topic.

Considerations for the teacher/leader

- ☐ Ask your class/participants what else should be discussed? What other things do we need in this classroom to learn?
- ☐ Create a list with your students of bodily needs (such as proper hydration, using the washroom, eating snacks, etc.) and how you will meet them in the context of your classroom.
- ☐ If the content of a conversation/presentation/lesson is likely to include post-traumatic triggers like depictions of violence, give a trigger warning.
- ☐ Take care of your own safety. If you need to step out of a space, feel free to do so if it is safe for you and others (i.e. students must remain supervised). If you feel unsafe, let someone know (colleague, administrator, facilitator, etc.).

Additional considerations for online events

Online spaces can be additionally complex. "Harsh and unpleasant communication online is a real perceived threat by adolescents and creates a sense of unsafety in online spaces. Researchers and practitioners felt that it was much easier for harsh communication to occur online, as compared to face-to-face interventions." (Ndungu, Ngcobo-Sthole, and Gibbs, 2022)

Use the same standards for online spaces as the ones agreed to above.

- ☐ Discuss your expectations for cameras to be on and off. When and how is this required?
- ☐ Discuss your expectations for use of the chat feature. Can they reply to issues whenever they wish? Will you invite responses at certain times?
- ☐ Add a rule of engagement around recording and sharing what is said online, for example:
 - We will ask permission to record, copy, or share anything that is shared in online environments.

Adapted from Sykes and Gachago, 2018 and [Safer Space Guidelines from the Mental Health Commission of Canada](#)

» Additional Resources

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Safer Spaces Series, including:

- [Safer Spaces? Braver Spaces? – Our Collective Responsibility](#)
- [Understanding Trauma](#)
- [Moral Elements of Care](#)

See other resources in the Catholic Teachers' Mental Health and Wellness Series, including:

- [Understanding Stress](#)
- [Understanding Anxiety and Depression](#)
- [Strategies to Promote Mental Health and Wellness](#)
- [Additional Resources - Mental Health and Wellness](#)

