



Agreeing to group rules

Adolescents set rules for working together in way that is inclusive, respectful, supportive and enjoyable.



3/5



1/5



2/5



15-20 min



Activity Overview

Purpose

Collaborate to decide on group rules.

Objectives

Adolescents will be able to:

- ▶ Practice communication skills.
- ▶ Cooperate with others.
- ▶ Build trust and respect.

Competency domains

Communication and expression; Cooperation and teamwork; Problem solving and managing conflict.

Works well for

Circles that are just starting a new cycle or welcoming many new members; adolescents of any age.

Phase

Starting Our Circle.

Before

Adolescents should have had at least two sessions to get to know each other. This activity works well early in a cycle, but it should not be attempted at the first session, as adolescents may feel too shy or overwhelmed. Strong Circles guidance and Group rules tool.

After

Use the Reviewing group rules activity at regular intervals to give adolescents a chance to reflect on their rules and change them if they wish. It can also be helpful in situations where adolescents feel excluded or are unable to resolve disagreements.

Preparation

None needed.





Agreeing to group rules

1

Ask adolescents to sit in a circle.
Optional: Give each participant two pieces of paper, and make sure they each have something to write with.

2

||| Facilitator says:

Today we are going to agree to rules for working as a circle in a way that helps us all to enjoy our time together, get along, and do our work well. Let's start by thinking about the following questions: What helps us to work well with other people?

3

Write on the marker board: **I work well with others when...and I have trouble working well with others when...**

4

||| Facilitator says:

Sit quietly while you think about or write your answers to the questions. Once you have had a few minutes to think, ask them to share a few answers.

5

||| Facilitator says:

"Now write down your ideas for rules that will help us to work well together. Think about things that everyone in the circle should always do, or never do, or anything else."

Give adolescents a few minutes to write down their ideas on their cards.

6

Explain:

Participants should place their pieces of paper in the middle of the circle, and explain their rules. As each adolescent shares a new paper, they can arrange it with the others, putting rules from related categories together. Ask everyone to sit quietly and listen while each person shares. Don't say anything out loud to agree or disagree.

7

||| Facilitator says:

"Do we all agree to these rules? Are there any that we will find difficult to carry out? Are there other important rules we should include to make sure that we all work together well, feel included and enjoy our time together?" Discuss their answers.

Share and Take Away

8

Discussion:

- ▶ How will we make sure that everyone feels included and welcome?
- ▶ Is there anyone who might not feel included and welcome, based on the rules already suggested? Make sure to include different groups of adolescents who are already part of the circle, or should be welcome to join, including boys, girls, adolescents with disabilities, those from different religions or ethnicities, and any other category.
- ▶ How will we make sure that everyone has a chance to share their ideas and try new things?
- ▶ What can we do to make sure that everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas or trying something new?
- ▶ How will we share our opinions in a way that is honest but does not make anyone feel bad or disrespected?

9

Write a final list of rules, including any new rules or changes to those suggested. Be sure to write the rules on a piece of paper or something else that can be posted and seen by the circle in the following sessions.

10

Conclude with a small ceremony to acknowledge the new rules. Adolescents can demonstrate their shared commitment to upholding the rules by reading them aloud, or signing the paper or board that displays them.



Agreeing to group rules

Do & Don't

- ✓ Review the guidelines for **Strong Circles** and use the tips for forming rules and agreements.
- ✓ Encourage the adolescents to frame their rules in terms of concrete things they will or will not do.
- ✓ At the beginning of the activity, let adolescents suggest their own rules, rather than suggesting rules yourself.
- ✓ Add your own questions or share suggestions for additional rules, to make sure that the circle will be fun for everyone.
- ✓ Encourage adolescents to include rules that will allow participants with different personalities, interests, abilities and strengths to participate equally.
- ✓ Let adolescents experiment with rules that may be difficult to follow, as long as they won't cause harm. (Experimenting with rules is part of their learning experience) Keep the final list of rules and post it in the space each time the circle meets.
- ✗ Agree to rules that allow adolescents to insult, bully or exclude each other (including members of the circle or those who might join).

Adaptation

For younger adolescents: Encourage them to agree to rules that are simple, specific and easy to understand, rather than complex rules that are difficult to explain or follow.

For low-literacy participants: Adolescents can use drawings or symbols to create a list of group rules that they can refer to in the future.

Environment

Indoor or outdoor space. Quiet.

Supplies

- ▶ Marker board.
- ▶ Marker.
- ▶ Small piece of paper or blank card (two for each adolescent).
- ▶ Paper or notebook for writing personal ideas and thoughts (optional).
- ▶ Flip chart paper or poster board, to write down the final list of group rules.

Improvise

Adolescents can draw or paint the rules.

Adolescents can create role plays to explore what happens when they do or do not follow the rules.

Continue

Encourage adolescents to use, review and update their rules on a regular basis.