

Consensus
Empowerment
Interlocking Oppressions
Rape Culture
Safety
Sexual Violence #Sex

COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING

Rape Crisis Services is committed to supporting a collective consensus-based model of communication and decision making. Recognizing that external power structures will at times make this process challenging, we make a commitment to addressing these challenges in a forthright manner.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF FEMINIST, ETHICAL COMMUNICATION

Based on the work of Kit Evans, August, 1980

1. Personal agendas are valid. Secret agendas are anti-group and potentially destructive. Dishonesty/secrecy of purpose creates dishonest/unethical communication.
2. Invalidating another person is an unethical means of advocating a point of view.
3. Seeking power over group direction by blocking the voices of others is non-consensual in intent/outcome.
4. It is the group's responsibility to maintain mutual support despite differences of opinion.
5. Empowerment of each member is the responsibility of each other member.
6. Each member has an obligation to develop an environment that encourages the free flow of information.
7. Each member has an obligation to be clear with other members; each person owes it to each other person to do that clearing with them.
8. Processing is a valid part of communication, gossip is not.
9. The purpose of each individual's commitment within the group is to work toward consensus, not to shape the decisions in their own image.
10. There are times when it is valid for members to agree that what is said in the room stays in the room. It is fair for the group and its members to demand that some things be spoken about only as a group, in the group.
11. People know/notice when there is conflict, pain or mistrust between members. It is a

- patriarchal process that ignore feelings in doing business. It is pioneering to seek a way that acknowledges and validates each individual as part of our work.
12. Every personal relationship between members of a group affects the group and therefore may be personal but not always private.
 13. The means is the end.

GROUND RULES

- ▶▶ "Realistic" Respect - respect based on ability, performance, and skills, not job title.
- ▶▶ No violence
- ▶▶ Interrupt Oppressive Dynamic
- ▶▶ Take care of yourself
- ▶▶ "Ouch" - Red Flag Rule
- ▶▶ More than one emotion is acceptable
- ▶▶ Speak for yourself - be accountable for what you say
- ▶▶ Be aware of the role you are playing in the dynamic of the group.

GUIDELINES FOR CONFRONTATION

by Kit Evans, August, 1980

- Confrontation is loving, in that it is an act of commitment to yourself and to the belief in giving energy to getting clear with another person.
- Confrontation is not a one-shot act. It is not hit and run. You must be prepared to be there to work it through. If not completed in the first meeting, then stand by for further sharing.
- Confrontation is not dumping. Speaking is not the end. Getting it off your chest is not the goal. The goal is growth of understanding.
- Confrontation must be done with respect for the person you are touching.
- Confrontation is sharing, touching, struggling with another.
- Confrontation can be gentle. It must BE DONE WITH HONESTY.

(Kit Evans attributes this knowledge to Lynne Prossick)

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Step 1: Presentation - factual information and list of decisions needed

Step 2: Clarification - questions about presentation

Step 3: Proposal

Step 4: Clarification - question about the proposal

Step 5: Discussion - building support for the decision (amendments, concerns, input)

Step 6: Call for Consensus - 3 options:

Consensus

Stand Aside

Block - provide alternative proposal. Repeat process.

Definitions:

►Consensus - Agreement among substantial number of members reached after sustained study and group discussion. Consensus is the sense of what the group supports - not a vote, not a census, not a simple majority and not necessarily unanimity.

►Standing Aside - Statement of non-agreement but a willingness to support the work, (names are recorded in the minutes upon request).

►Blocking - Strong statement of disagreement with the proposal and no willingness to have the proposal affirmed. Group members have an ethical obligation to state that they will block as soon as they know that they cannot support the proposal. Persons choosing to block a proposal must state an alternative proposal that they would be willing to affirm.

Process Roles: Responsibility for facilitation of the consensus process should be shared by all group members.

►Facilitator - person responsible for moving the process through the above steps.

►Process Watcher - person responsible for observing process, any agreements made by the group concerning communication or principals of unity and keeping a list of names when more than one person request time to speak.

►Time Keeper - person responsible for apprising the group of time spent on each proposal. Facilitators are encouraged to negotiate time to be allotted to each proposal.