

SEVEN NORMS OF COLLABORATION

Pausing: Pausing before responding or asking a question allows time for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion, and decision-making.

Paraphrasing: Use a paraphrase starter that is comfortable for you. “So...” or “You’re feeling...” or “You’re thinking...” or “It sounds like...” and following the starter with a paraphrase assists members of the group to hear and understand one another as they formulate decisions.

Posing questions: Two intentions of posing questions are to explore and specify thinking. Questions may be posed to explore perceptions, assumptions, and intentions and invite others to inquire into their own thinking. For example, “What might be some outcomes we are envisioning?” Use focusing questions such as, “Which staff specifically?” or “What might be an example of that?” to increase clarity and precision of group members’ thinking. Inquire into the ideas of others before advocating for one’s own ideas.

Putting ideas on the table: Ideas are the heart of meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...”

Providing data: Providing data, both qualitative and quantitative, in a variety of forms supports group members in constructing shared understanding from their work. Data have no meaning beyond that which we make of them; shared meaning develops from collaboratively exploring, analyzing, and interpreting data.

Paying attention to self and others: Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and of others, and is aware of not only what he or she is saying, but also how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning style or social style when planning for, facilitating, and participating in group meetings. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.

Presuming positive intentions: Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional putdowns. Using positive intentions in your speech is one manifestation of this norm.