Group Agreements

From the Interaction Institute for Social Change ("Listening as Ally")

- Listen deeply
- Make I statements
- Step up, step back
- Keep it here
- We don't have to agree
- Use "ouch" and "oops"
- Be willing to be uncomfortable

Listen deeply - Listen for understanding, not to prepare your rebuttal. Don't interrupt people as they speak. Try to acknowledge what you've heard before going on to make another point. When you hear something that is different from your own thinking or analysis, accept the speaker's description of their experiences as real for them, even if you haven't experienced it or don't understand it.

Make I statements - Speak from your own experience rather than speaking for others or about others, or generalizing your experience, assuming it applies to others.

Step up, step back - If you tend to talk early and often, challenge yourself to step back and make space for others. If you tend not to talk much, challenge yourself to jump in.

Keep it here - Exercise good judgment and respect when people share personal stories. Carry away what you learned without sharing who said what.

We don't have to agree - When we disagree, respond to the statement or the behavior instead of the person. Avoid using blame, shame, and guilt on ourselves or others. Try saying "...yes AND..." rather than "...yes BUT..." to make space for different views to be heard.

Use "ouch" and "oops" - We may say something without intending to harm or offend, but harm or offense might result anyway. *If we notice ourselves saying it*, we can say "oops" and try again. *If we notice others saying it*, we can say "ouch" and share in a sentence or two what was off-putting. Use these situations as teachable moments to highlight the difference between intent and impact. No shaming or blaming, just a straightforward way to name things that hurt or offend.

Be willing to be uncomfortable - Don't mistake discomfort for a lack of safety. It's possible to be safe and uncomfortable at the same time. Lean into the discomfort to see what you can learn.