



USBC

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

Brave Space Agreements

At the USBC we believe courageous and invigorating conversations are essential to achieving our vision of thriving families and communities. We commit to holding brave learning spaces where First Food field advocates can explore difficult issues with courage and curiosity. A brave space allows individuals to express themselves and learn from one another in ways that positively challenge previous perspectives.

In USBC brave spaces we all commit to calling people and organizations “in” to accountability and connection, rather than calling them “out” with shame or blame. These group agreements are the guard rails, to provide facilitative guidance for everyone engaging in our work.

Acknowledgments

These agreements were adapted using several resources including the USBC-affiliated Lactation Support Provider Constellation, ProInspire, The Equity Lab, and Courageous Conversations®.

Expect and Presume Welcome

As a shared learning community, we acknowledge we are here to learn and grow with one another. By centering our work on our shared goals and values we approach conversations with respect and generosity, trusting this will further our shared learning.

Be a learner, engage with curiosity

Approach challenging perspectives from a place of curiosity rather than frustration or judgment. This includes staying open to feedback and inquiry others may offer you. Acknowledge that some narratives have been erased or are misrepresented in the evidence base. Open yourself to the idea that other forms of evidence, such as lived experience, are valid and necessary knowledge repositories.

Stay engaged

Keep your heart and mind engaged during the conversation. Limit the use of technology and distractions not connected to the learning space.

Listen and process while caring for yourself

Be an active listener, listening for understanding, not the chance to respond. Stay aware of your thoughts and feelings in the moment. Take space when needed to process your emotions.

Assume Positive Intent

Trust that everyone is present to learn and engage with authenticity. Despite this, sometimes a thought or feeling comes across poorly. Share what you heard or felt and ask the speaker for clarification.

Lean into Discomfort

Fear and discomfort during challenging conversations is inevitable, especially in dialogues about race and other domains of identity. Experiencing discomfort is often part of the learning process. Staying engaged, listening deeply to perspectives different than your own, is the pathway to healing and change. Taking up this practice builds capacity to navigate difference with increasing skill. This is the imperative of our times; don't be afraid to be transformed by what is difficult.

Speak your truth with respect (understanding that it's only part of the truth)

Sharing your experience, thoughts, and feelings with honesty and humility also contributes to the shared learning process. Recognizing that all experiences are valid, share your truths in ways that respect the experience of others. Speak from the "I" and honor the collective.

Grace with ourselves. Grace with others.

This is difficult work. Each person is at a different point in their journey, potentially holding views vehemently opposed to someone else in the group. As a learning community, we are all in each other's care. It is helpful to remember that in the many facets of our lives, we have all held beliefs that we no longer hold, articulated thoughts or opinions poorly, and underestimated the impact of our words. While we are all accountable for what we say and do, remember to give yourself and others the grace and space to grow.

Attend to Impact

Recognize that sometimes our words create harm despite our best intentions. If someone expresses pain by what you've shared, pause and take a deep breath. Center the other person's feelings of hurt, not your own feelings of intent or defense. Know that you can talk about your feelings later.

What's said here, stays here; What's learned here, leaves here.

To support each other in our risk-taking, we agree to respect the privacy of everyone's identity and life experiences. If later we share our experiences; we will honor others by not identifying their names and stories.

Expect and accept non-closure

There is no "quick fix," to-do list, or solution to the complex problems of racism and inequity. Expect that we will not reach closure or solutions for the issues discussed and that you may leave with unaddressed questions and concerns. It may be necessary to revisit conversations to reconcile differences, and in other cases, things will go left unsaid or unfinished. Therefore, we must commit to an ongoing dialogue and collective growth journey.