

Safer Spaces Agreement

This agreement was co-authored by ESTEEM's YMT and Young Adults, by gathering feedback and holding discussions at Drop-in's during January 2019.

ESTEEM recognises the importance of being part of a community. For this reason, ESTEEM young adults have drafted this Safer Space Agreement to create a Code of being with each other, which will strengthen and support our community and help us avoid patterns of harmful behaviour of all kinds within ESTEEM and beyond.

The Safer Spaces Agreement is a mutually agreed Code which, on being involved with ESTEEM, we all will agree to:

- support and protect the personal autonomy, safety and well-being of all who participate in ESTEEM, including visitors, long-term staff and volunteers;
- empower all ESTEEM participants to challenge or speak up about harmful behaviour and provide them with support and clear procedures to do so effectively (including educational materials, response strategies, etc.)
- nurture a strong, safe, healthy, reliable and diverse community surrounding ESTEEM.
- support and promote the Values of ESTEEM: Caring, Supportive, Inclusive, Integrity and Valuing.
- overcome barriers preventing cooperation and solidarity with individuals and groups who feel unsafe or unwelcome at ESTEEM

This Agreement is used as benchmark to where we're AIMing for, but ESTEEM also recognises that it has its limitations, and this is an ongoing process. The Safer Space Agreement is only as strong as all of our commitment to keeping it alive. We will do that through acts of thoughtfulness, kindness, helpfulness and solidarity.

As part of this Safer Spaces Agreement, we acknowledge that we may make mistakes (that's all part of life!), as we have all been affected by things in the world which leaves a mark on our own well-being. These stresses can affect the way we think, feel and behave, and we can find ourselves behaving in ways which can negatively affect others and ourselves. We understand that failure to address harmful behaviour only weakens our communities and the development of ourselves as a community and as individuals.

In being part of ESTEEM we are agreeing to:

- be prepared and willing for others to remind us of this group commitment
- acknowledge the value of the learning from our mistakes
- work together to overcome the things that get in the way of developing ourselves

Definitions

We define harmful behaviour as *any* that demeans, marginalizes, rejects, threatens or harms anyone on the basis of ability, age, class/income level, cultural background,

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education, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, language, physical appearance, race, religion, self-expression, sexual orientation, status as a parent or other such factors.

Harmful behaviour comes in a wide variety of forms, from seemingly harmless jokes to threats of violence, from interrupting, to verbal abuse, from unwanted touching, to assault.

Some forms are more extreme and irreparable than others, but all are unacceptable under the *ESTEEM's* Safer Spaces Agreement.

Prevention and Education

We recognise that the best way to deal with harmful behaviour is to prevent it happening in the first place. ESTEEM will ensure that all people involved with ESTEEM are familiar with the Safer Spaces Agreement and it's expectations. We aim to offer to support individuals who need it, with resources, training and skill sessions.

Restorative Justice Model

Every incident of harmful behaviour is unique and thus requires a unique response. Different types of harmful behaviour demand significantly different reactions (Often staff may need to speak to one another before agreed action is taken). Staff will make themselves available to hear concerns and deal with the situation when reasonably possible but may not be available or take action immediately.

There are positive ways we can all help:

It's important to recognise life stresses us all every day, harmful behaviours happen every day but to some more than others. Over time, jokes, slurs and stereotypes can snowball into a pattern of negativity that is far more damaging than an isolated incident.

Challenging someone:

Some methods of challenging harmful behaviours are more productive than others. As an example, if someone makes a Transphobic comment, another person might insult them back, get angry at them, or voice vague disapproval for their behaviour. Instead, it is far more effective to clearly and calmly explain why the comment was harmful. Providing as much specific info as possible. Offering resources on Trans issues would be a good next step. This way people can have the chance to see things from a different point of view, instead of feeling defensive.

Responding to being challenged:

Likewise, acting aggressively, defensively or passively when being challenged for harmful behaviour is another common reaction. A more effective response when being challenged is to listen to the feedback, take action by apologising or making amends and engage with learning and reflection on the situation.

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Our goal is to acknowledge and unlearn harmful behaviours without rejecting anyone. This community-orientated approach is also called 'restorative justice'.

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This [policy/procedure] was approved by the [Name] and is issued on a version controlled basis under her signature.

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Revisions to this document		
Revision number:	Date:	Description on modifications:
01	<date of revision here>	<type/mention of modification here>

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