

Communication Guidelines for Meetings

Intention

As a community based on consensus as our decision making method, we come together not only to speak, but to listen. We come willing to be influenced by the ideas and opinions of others. We always seek to improve our skills in this area and have decided to pay special attention to the following behaviors in meetings:

- **Let the facilitator manage the meeting – follow their direction (See Facilitation Responsibilities and Guidelines in 2006 Agreements file.)**
- Facilitator, be clear about purpose and outcome of agenda items
- Let others complete their thoughts, without interrupting others verbally or non-verbally.
- Talkers, pay more attention to listening, and give others equal time, be concise
- Those who seldom talk, know that the community depends on you speaking up and sharing your perspective as well
- Pay special attention to hearing all the voices in the room, even those most quiet
- Speak loudly enough to be heard by all
- Refrain from personal attacks (name calling, assuming bad intent, physical intimidation or violence)

Silver Sage Facilitation Responsibilities and Guidelines

Responsibilities

- Encourage full participation
- Promote mutual understanding
- Foster inclusive solutions

Guidelines

- Post and reference our community norms
 - Listen with attention, compassion and curiosity
 - Speak with intention
 - Contribute to the wellbeing of the group

- Ask each other for what we need and offer what we can
 - Pause from time to time to re-gather our thoughts or focus
 - Respect appropriate confidentiality
- Post and reference our community vision
- Post and review agenda
- Start and end meetings at agreed-on times
- Re-negotiate agenda if necessary to end on time or extend
- Be clear about expected outcomes for each topic (for example, brainstorming; problem-solving; gathering of views; consensus decision)
- Use appropriate facilitation techniques for each outcome
- Keep discussion focused; use “parking lot” or “tracking” techniques to capture contributions not relevant to topic
- Be sure everyone’s voice is heard
 - Use talking stick or other mechanisms such as “stacking” to identify order of those who wish to speak
 - Draws reticent members out
 - Tactfully limit talkative members’ contributions
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Stay neutral when facilitating; explicitly step out of facilitator’s role when expressing opinion
- Summarize any action items and next steps