

Agreement on Confrontation, Violence and Minor Conflicts

Confrontation and Violence:

Intention: We agree that it is our responsibility as community members to behave towards one another with respect and kindness. We also agree that hostile expression and behavior in a community setting are incompatible with building a safe and functioning community. This Agreement intends to honor individual differences while setting a baseline of expression and behavior to support our community's functioning.

Agreement:

We each agree that the following behaviors are unacceptable in our community:

1. Physical violence
2. Threats of physical violence
3. Verbal attacks, profanity, taunting, teasing, public shaming or name calling directed at another individual

If we witness, either as direct participants or as bystanders, any of the above behaviors, we will as soon as possible notify the Conflict Resolution Group (CRG), a sub-team of the CET, about the incident. The CRG will meet separately with all parties involved to listen, coach or brainstorm options in order to help the parties resolve the conflict on their own.

After an intervention the CRG will report back to the CET in general terms, respecting the privacy of the individuals involved, sharing whether the conflict has been resolved or whether other forms of intervention may be needed. These may include:

- Engaging professional mediation services to support the individuals in resolving their conflict.
- Referring the incident to the Steering Team to determine appropriate consequences for violation of our agreements. Examples of possible consequences are:
 - Apologizing to the other party and the community for the unacceptable behavior
 - Making a plan to manage future behavior (classes, counseling)

We agree to engage with the above steps and recommendations in good faith to achieve resolution. This agreement does not preclude parties from seeking redress from the civil and/or criminal justice systems outside the Community; however, individuals are encouraged to work within the above recommendations whenever possible.

We also agree that if a situation arises where we are concerned about the actions or behavior of non-community individuals or groups who are here by invitation (doing work for the community, renting our facilities, or as guests of members) we will take our concern to the member, Team Lead or other person serving as the contact with them and will NOT engage in confrontational behavior with the outside individual or group. If a guest has not been informed about our community agreements, such as no smoking or pets in our common house, we may inform the guest politely of our agreements.

Guidelines for taking personal responsibility in our interactions with one another

The agreements outlined above provide a means to address behavior that has gotten out of hand and violates our baseline norms of respectful adult conduct. Most such incidents can be avoided or defused by applying the suggestions presented below to manage our own behavior and to protect ourselves if others appear to be having trouble managing their behavior.

If we are concerned about managing our own behavior:

If we find ourselves becoming anxious, irritated or frustrated in a community setting (community or team meeting, communal meal, sharing circle, for example) or with other individuals at Silver Sage outside of such settings, we will strive to avail ourselves of one or more of the following options:

1. Use “I” statements to express feelings, describe the situation factually and ask for what you need.
2. Ask the facilitator for help, if in a facilitated meeting.
3. If you are concerned about being able to control your own behavior, leave the room or walk away to cool off; return if possible; also, if possible, indicate a time when you feel you will be able to check in with the group or individual before leaving. *Possible things you may say: “I’m feeling very upset now and need to take some time to cool off. I’ll check in with you in (time) when I’m feeling better.”*
4. Ask for someone to accompany you and listen to you.
5. Ask yourself “If this happens again, what can I do?”—talk to someone else, make a plan

If we are concerned about another’s behavior:

If we believe that another person may be losing control, one or another of the following options may be helpful:

1. If in a facilitated meeting the facilitator may, either at his/her own initiative or at the request of a member:
 - a. Describe what you are observing
 - b. Ask what would support the individual in controlling their behavior
 - c. Ask the individual to leave if he or she can’t control their behavior
 - d. Adjourn the meeting if the behavior continues; reconvene later
2. In a Community Meeting the Heart Keeper is empowered to intervene to stop the proceedings if he or she feels the emotional tone of the meeting is compromised. See the Heart Keeper job description for further details.
3. In a facilitated meeting or any other group or team meeting, when an individual feels that the emotional tone of the meeting is compromised, that individual is empowered to stand in witness to his or her observations. The facilitator or team lead retains discretion to address the situation as he or she determines is best.
4. In any situation, whether within or outside of a group meeting, if we believe ourselves to be the object of another person’s behavior that is becoming overheated, the following are options that may be of immediate help:

- a. First and foremost, take care of yourself. You may remove yourself from the situation if you deem it necessary. If possible, indicate a time that you will be available to “check in” with the other person after a cooling off period. *Possible things you may say: “I would like to (hear you; understand your position) but at the moment I’m feeling too (defensive; upset; threatened) to continue. I’ll check back with you in (time) to see if we’re able to talk then.”*
 - b. If in a facilitated or group meeting, ask the facilitator or convener for help.
 - c. Apologize, validate the individual’s feelings, acknowledge their position, or take other steps to defuse the situation if you can do so genuinely. *Possible things you may say: “I would like to (hear you; understand your position) but I need a little help to stay centered. Can we have a minute of silence before we continue?”*
 - d. Talk to the individual privately at a later time. If it would help, arrange to have a neutral companion or witness.
5. In any of these situations, if you believe that the behavior observed was in violation of our agreements as outlined on page 1, notify the CET of the incident.

Resolving Disagreements and Minor Conflicts

Intent

Conflict and disagreement are a natural and normal part of all relationships, from individuals to communities. It may arise in matters such as noise between neighbors, difficulties in a team, disagreements about our Community agreements and responsibilities, problems with pets and any number of other issues that may arise between neighbors. When a conflict arises among members in our community, it adversely affects our community as a whole. Community members all have a responsibility to constructively support members in conflict. Conflict is only a problem when it is ignored or not dealt with constructively.

Conflicts arising within a team should first be dealt with by the team, as the group closest to the individuals and topic involved. If a conflict is not resolved at the team level or occurs outside a team, it may be considered by the Community Enhancement Team at the request of any of the individuals involved. In each case, every effort will be made to ensure that all individuals are heard and that different communication styles and needs are respected.

This Agreement presupposes that the individuals experiencing conflict nonetheless remain able to behave towards one another with respect and kindness in accordance with the Community’s norms and as set forth above. We strongly support the use of “I” statements, genuine apology as appropriate, and methods such as those suggested in Non-Adversarial Communication as ways to communicate about and defuse conflict constructively.

Agreement

Conflict between two or more residents or within a team

In the event of a conflict between two or more residents, the following protocol will be followed:

1. When individuals have conflicts with each other they are strongly encouraged to try to resolve their differences among themselves whenever possible, and not to talk to third parties about those differences. They may, however, request that others accompany them for support when meeting with the other party.
2. In the event the conflicting parties feel unable to resolve the matter themselves, for whatever reason, one or more of the conflicting members may ask the Community Enhancement Team for assistance. Following such a request, the CET will, as soon as possible, schedule a meeting or will refer the matter to the Reconciliation Group to promptly meet separately with those involved to listen, provide coaching and support for those involved to help them resolve their conflict on their own.
3. If the above does not result in a resolution and if the conflicting parties agree that professional mediation is appropriate, the CET may engage professional mediation services to assist the parties in resolving their conflict.
4. In the event that the above does not result in a resolution that is mutually acceptable to the parties, one or more of the conflicting parties or a member of the CET may request that the Steering Team review the issue in light of our Common Agreements and in the best interests of the whole community. The Steering Team may ask to meet with the parties involved at its discretion. The Steering Team may, if it deems it appropriate, enter a final decision to resolve the issue.