

PEACE AND JUSTICE INSTITUTE

All People. All Voices. All Matter.

Principles for How We Treat Each Other

Peace and Justice Institute (PJI) at Valencia College

If building healthy relationships is the healing balm of human existence and human suffering, then the ***Principles for How We Treat Each Other*** are practices that move us toward strengthening those bonds in our lives and in the community. These ***Principles for How We Treat Each Other*** help support inclusive, caring, and safe environments where individuals learn how to listen deeply and without judgment and communicate honestly and respectfully.

The Principles for How We Treat Each Other have been utilized in the classroom at Valencia College over the last decade to create mutual learning spaces that allow students and faculty to bring their whole selves into the room. These Principles emphasize both the head and the heart to create an interactive pedagogy for teachers and space for students to increase their rational knowledge as well as their social and emotional abilities to deal with adversity.

In the workplace, ***The Principles for How We Treat Each Other*** have been widely adopted as a way to foster an inclusive environment where workers are encouraged to be communicators of their individuality and feel welcome, heard and accepted by their colleagues.

In the community, ***The Principles for How We Treat Each Other*** support thousands of residents in Central Florida as they begin the transformational work of reflective practice; creating the foundation for authentic conversations on issues that impact the self and belonging in the community.

Please contact PJI to explore the many possibilities of how the ***Principles for How We Treat Each Other*** can build community and serve as the core of a trauma-informed healing practice.

VALENCIA COLLEGE

PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER

Our Practice of Respect and Community Building

1. **Create a hospitable and accountable community.** We all arrive in isolation and need the generosity of friendly welcomes. Bring all of yourself to the work in this community. Welcome others to this place and this work, and presume that you are welcomed as well. Hospitality is the essence of restoring community.
2. **Listen deeply.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.
3. **Create an advice free zone.** Replace advice with curiosity as we work together for peace and justice. Each of us is here to discover our own truths. We are not here to set someone else straight, to “fix” what we perceive as broken in another member of the group.
4. **Practice asking honest and open questions.** A great question is ambiguous, personal and provokes anxiety.
5. **Give space for unpopular answers.** Answer questions honestly even if the answer seems unpopular. Be present to listen not debate, correct or interpret.
6. **Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift in our busy world. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words. This applies to the speaker, as well – be comfortable leaving your words to resound in the silence, without refining or elaborating on what you have said.
7. **Suspend judgment.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.
8. **Identify assumptions.** Our assumptions are usually invisible to us, yet they undergird our worldview. By identifying our assumptions, we can then set them aside and open our viewpoints to greater possibilities.
9. **Speak your truth.** You are invited to say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected. Own your truth by remembering to speak only for yourself. Using the first person “I” rather than “you” or “everyone” clearly communicates the personal nature of your expression.
10. **When things get difficult, turn to wonder.** If you find yourself disagreeing with another, becoming judgmental, or shutting down in defense, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”
11. **Practice slowing down.** Simply the speed of modern life can cause violent damage to the soul. By intentionally practicing slowing down we strengthen our ability to extend nonviolence to others—and to ourselves.
12. **All voices have value.** Hold these moments when a person speaks as precious because these are the moments when a person is willing to stand for something, trust the group and offer something they see as valuable.
13. **Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions held in the group. Allow what is said in the group to remain there.

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Institute with considerable help from the works of Peter Block, Parker Palmer, the Dialogue Group and the Center for Renewal and Wholeness in Higher Education