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Unpacking "safe" - visioning exercise [starter activity]

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This is a visioning exercise. The main purpose of the exercise is for participants to express their own definitions of a safe space and look for shared understanding of a safe space. A group might use this as a first exercise in designing new online spaces together or in redesigning an existing one with shared values of safety in mind.

This activity would work well as an ice breaker and as a way of grounding our ideas about safe online spaces in our experience of safe physical spaces.

This activity has three stages:

- Individual visualising time which can be done with words or in drawing.
- Small group discussion about "safe".
- Full group reflection to discuss and identify shared and divergent definitions of "safe" within the group.

It is highly suggested that this activity is followed by Input + Discussion: Privacy, Consent and Safety.

Learning objectives this activity responds to

- Define what they mean by safe/private online space.

Who is this activity for?

This activity can be used with participants with different levels of experience with both online spaces and creating safe spaces.

Time required

This activity will require about **40 minutes.**

Resources needed for this activity

- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Printer-size paper if participants are drawing.

Mechanics

Individual visualisation: 10 minutes

Ask your participants to close their eyes and think about a specific place/time/circumstance in which they felt the safest. Encourage them to be specific in their visualisation – not in terms of the place/time/circumstance, but in thinking about the factors that made them feel safe. This could also be an imaginary place/time/circumstance.

Option: Drawing

This can also be a visualising exercise where you ask participants to draw the place/time/circumstance in which they feel the safest, including the elements and factors that made them feel safe.

Small group discussion: 15 minutes

In small groups of three to five people each, ask participants to share with one another what they have visualised.

Note: For a workshop with six or fewer participants, you can facilitate both discussion steps as a full group. The purpose of using small groups is to ensure that each participant has time to speak about what they have visualised.

Full group: 15 minutes

To process, write "SAFE" in the middle of a sheet of flip chart paper and "mind map" the question: "What was it about the place/time/circumstance that made you feel safe?"

At the end of the exercise, you will have come up with a list of words, phrases and concepts that define "safe".

Notes for the trainer/facilitator

- Look for commonalities in participants' responses but also interrogate differences in their responses.
- Pay attention and highlight factors that can be applied to online spaces, or connect with the basic concepts above.
- Always synthesise key learnings from the activity to reinforce concepts.

Suggested tweak

- Instead of just using a flip chart to mind map the word "SAFE", you can have a co-trainer/facilitator note the words and concepts that the participants are expressing on a notepad or Word document, and as the discussion ends, use a word cloud generator to graphically show the words that define "SAFE".

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