
The Agreements

A social architecture to invite wisdom through dialog and conversation

1. A deep full breath before speaking



This breath has many virtues. It helps participants to let go of their selfish urge to keep a grasp on the conversation. They can surrender to what emerges from the center. Participants offer time to themselves to observe their inner processes. What has just been said becomes deeply listened to and ‘breathed in.’ Participants move from reaction (responding, taking the floor) to creation (inviting creativity through emergence). Interestingly, each time one speaks right after someone else, leaving no space for breathing and creativity, the lower self takes control.

2. Listen to the center



By center, we mean the physical center of a group in circle, or the experienced center in a global collective. Listen to the will that tries to manifest from the heart of the group. Give voice to it. This special mode of listening and voicing connects us to others.

3. Speak to the center



Speak to the center rather than to a particular person. Participants agree not to engage in one-to-one conversations in the midst of the collective process. Although speaking and listening to the center may feel a little artificial at first, it allows the emergence of the whole and helps shift the whole dynamic of the group into a transpersonal context.

4. Don't take the floor, have it offered



Because time feels scarce, participants want to use this resource wisely and moderately. Notice that in groups where people interrupt one another or respond without leaving space, humans grab time the same way predators grab their prey in the wild—the strongest, the most agile, the fastest, the craftiest get the better share. Having the floor offered brings us in a gift economy, just like when we seat around a table with kindly served and shared dishes. It creates an entirely new, benevolent group dynamic.

5. Speak from direct personal experience



Sharing personal experience invites boldness, vulnerability, trust and compassionate relationships. When a person speaks theoretically he/she separates himself/herself from the original experience, and places a barrier between him/her and the others. Here we check whether what we want to say imposes a generality on others, or if it might hide some personal story. Stories have the virtue of myths—they carry emotions, multilevel life experiences, cosmologies and vibrations—a much richer universe for a group to share.

6. Invite silence



Any participant can ask for silence at any moment. Conversation gets immediately suspended and everyone enters into silence for one minute. It offers the space to explore the current context at a deeper level, name our experience, explore our emotions, needs, sense of emergence in the group, etc. After this silent breathing space, the person who asked for the silence can decide --or not-- to explain why he/she invited it. Conversation can then resume, likely filled with a new dimension.