

SPIRIT IN ACTION'S GUIDE TO WORKING IN DIVERSE GROUPS



SPIRIT IN ACTION

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Spirit in Action is a non-profit, movement-building organization that supports, sustains, connects, and builds networks with those who are passionate about justice, love, equality, creativity and sustainability to work collectively for deep and lasting social change and ecological balance.

**We
are
the
ones
we
have
been
waiting
for.**

*part
of a
message
from the
Hopi
elders*

Those of us who are working in diverse groups are creating the roadmaps we need to move from relationships based on power over other people to relationships based on **shared power**. It is a gift to do this work with each other. It can also be a challenge.

This is a guide about what we've been learning along the way.

INTRODUCTION

The work we have done around power, privilege and oppression has been critical to our communities and to the movement we are trying to build. Race, language, culture and ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation, class, religion and spirituality, abilities and disabilities are on the table as we organize around issues and build networks. *(If they're not, they should be.)* We know what needs to be done. Yet, when the time comes to work together we often return to *business as usual*.

We believe that in order to build
A P O W E R F U L M O V E M E N T

**ACTIVIST
CULTURE
M U S T
CHANGE**

and so must our own behavior. This
change will come when we attend to
our inner work while we are doing
the outer work of organizing.

FEELINGS
THOUGHTS
CONFLICT
IDENTITY

**INNER
WORK**



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING
COMMUNITY BUILDING
MOVEMENT BUILDING
ACTIONS



**OUTER
WORK**

AGREEMENTS

Begin by creating working agreements; they are essential to a group's ability to really work together. These are the **t w o q u e s t i o n s** that have helped our groups create the agreements they have needed.



**What do you
need from me
so that you
can step into
your power
with me?**



**What do you
need from us
so that you
can step into
your power
with the group?**

The next few pages list the
a g r e e m e n t s
that participants in Spirit in Action's
Leadership Program have come up
with. Choose the ones that will be
most useful to your group. Revisit
them at the beginning of each
meeting. And use them at the end of
your meeting to open a conversation
about the group's process.

Work from your heart.

Stay present.

Slow down.

Listen deeply to yourself and to others. With practice, this can be done at the same time.

Ask questions before making assumptions. If you assume anything, assume people are well-intentioned. We are all a work in progress.

Learn to hold the contradictions.

Practice self-monitoring.

We are each responsible for taking care
of ourselves.

Know what triggers you and manage your
reactions and responses.

Ask for help when you need it.

Everyone has a choice: to act or not to act.

If you don't interrupt something that
bothers you, you alone are responsible.

Go directly to a person when something
comes up for you. Gossiping is not useful.

Practice letting go.

Not everything needs to be processed or fixed.

AGREEMENTS for the **OUTER WORK**

Notice what's going on in the group.

Practice relationships where power is shared and people are respected.

Interrupt oppression.

Learn about our cultural differences: what people value and different ways of doing things.

Hold yourself and others accountable to the agreements.

Agree to disagree.

You don't have to agree with everything.

Find your voice and make sure there is room for others to find their voices.

When sharing ideas, “yes, and...” works better than “yes, but...”

Trust the people who have volunteered to lead, and if you can't, say what's going on for you.

Appreciate the hard work of each other.

Laugh and have fun together.

WORKING with the **AGREEMENTS**

In order to get members of a group to really focus on the agreements and on changes in their behavior, ask individuals to set goals at the beginning of your time together.

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graph TD; A[In order to get members of a group to really focus on the agreements and on changes in their behavior, ask individuals to set goals at the beginning of your time together.] --> B[WHAT agreement will be most challenging for you?]; A --> C[WHAT support will you need?]; A --> D[WHAT will you be working on today?]
```

WHAT
agreement
will be most
challenging
for you?

WHAT
support
will you need?

WHAT
will you be
working on
today?

In order to get members of the group to focus on their process and on their agreements, ask the group to reflect at the end of your time together.

H O W
did we do?

W H A T
are we doing
w e l l ?

W H A T
do we need
to focus our
attention on?

**It's
not
about
being
CAREFUL
with
one
another,
it's
about
being
MINDFUL.**

OPENINGS

Groups need openings. Set aside the first 5 minutes of a group meeting to allow each person to get present and to bring the group together as a whole. Breathing and being quiet is a simple way to do this. Reading an inspiring quote or poem, or playing a song also works. You might ask people to connect to your group's vision, what inspires them to stay committed to the work, or the goals of the meeting you are about to have. As groups meet over time, the openings become richer and have a positive effect on the energy of the group.

CLOSINGS

Groups also need closings. Leave 10-15 minutes at the end to close. Give each person a chance to briefly share what worked well and what didn't. Give appreciations and feedback to the group and to individuals.

FEEDBACK

Giving feedback provides a leader with an opportunity to grow.

It's all about how we say it.

Offer feedback from your heart and without judgment.

Frame it in a way that will help the other person to be a better leader.

Base your feedback on what you observe—it's useful information.

HOW DO
you like
to give
feedback?

HOW DO
you like
to receive
feedback?

POWERFUL PAUSES

When things get tough
it can be helpful to take
a one minute pause.

When there is
an important decision to make,
a pause between speakers
can be helpful.

When
feelings
come up
for you



IF SOMETHING IS GOING ON

Be aware when feelings come up for you.

Identify what IT is.
You may have to feel
into your body to find it.

Let others know what's going on.

Ask for what you need.

IF STRONG FEELINGS COME UP

Breathe.

It is your job to calm yourself down.

Put your hand over your heart (if it will help, close your eyes) and go inside.

or

Get up and move around.

It helps to let the group know what you are doing.

Ask for what you need.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN OFFENDED

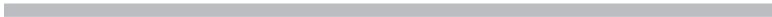
Slow down.

Be with the hurt.

When you can be with hurt within yourself,
you can be with another when they hurt.

Acknowledge the hurt you are feeling.

Choose how you will respond.





**strong
feelings
do
not
necessarily
constitute
an
emergency**

IF CONFLICT COMES UP

Everyone has a role in conflict.
No one is an innocent bystander.
Our attitude about conflict can
move us forward or shut us down.
Be aware of yours.
Shift from judging and defending to:

LISTENING
SHARING
LEARNING
GROWING

These **q u e s t i o n s**
can be useful when a group needs
to talk about their conflict.



H O W
did I
contribute
to the
conflict?

W H A T
do I need?

WHAT
am I
willing
to do?



**Every
one
needs
to
be
willing
to
change
for
change
to
happen.**

Practice
forgiving
yourself
and each other.



*If I have
offended you
in any way,
knowingly or
unknowingly,
may you
forgive me.*

*If I have offended
myself in anyway,
knowingly or
unknowingly,
**may I forgive
m y s e l f.***

*If you have offended me
in any way, knowingly
or unknowingly,
may I forgive you.*

FORGIVENESS

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