

Hosting A Meeting



HAVE AN AGENDA

Create a plan for the meeting. What do you want the participants to take away from it? What do you want to have accomplished by the end? Set out goals, allot a set amount of time for each one and review them with participants at the start of each meeting. You may also want to send participants a proposed agenda beforehand so they can think of items for discussion in advance.

PLAN AN ICEBREAKER

Icebreakers give a good jump-start to a meeting. They engage participants and help them get comfortable with talking to each other. Common icebreakers include asking participants silly questions (e.g. “Which kitchen appliance would you be?”) or games such as Where the Wind Blows or Two Truths and a Lie.

AGREE ON GROUP NORMS

Talk to the group about guidelines for a smooth meeting. What do people need to have a good meeting? What should the noise level be at? When do we have a break? Make sure there is a group consensus on what these guidelines will be. You can lead this discussion as a group activity by using the **Brave Space facilitation technique**.

SET GROUP ROLES

Offer participants roles that help facilitate the meeting. Who will take the meeting minutes and keep track of time? Who will record what is happening? Who will watch the vibe in the room and calling for breaks? Let participants volunteer for these roles as needed.

ASK QUESTIONS TO THE GROUP

Ask the group questions that will open up or deepen their conversations. Listen to their answers and periodically summarize what has been discussed back to them.

HAVE A PARKING LOT

A **parking lot** is a place for ideas or topics that have come up in discussion that cannot be immediately addressed but still need to be heard. Record these topics on chart paper or in the meeting minutes and create a space to address them later.

CLOSING

When closing the meeting, go over anything still in the parking lot and identify which items need to be left until the next meeting. Then review the meeting minutes and ask the group if there is anything missing that they would like to have added to the minutes.



Checking-In

In The New Mentality, **check-ins** help facilitators understand their participants' state of mind by connecting with them on a personal level. They allow participants to share how they are feeling so the group can know how to best support one another and focus on the task at hand.

Check-ins can take many forms; participants can be asked to answer a question, share a personal artifact, or something else that will meet the purpose of the meeting.

Check in at the beginning and end of each meeting. Ask each person where they are at emotionally, physically, or mentally with the discussions being had. Ask for feedback on what would work better next time and what worked well this time around.

CHECK IN QUESTIONS

Adapted from amandafenton.com/2014/04/check-in-question-id

- What is one thing that brings you energy and **joy**?
- What kind of **day** have you had so far?
- Why did you accept the **invitation** to join this gathering?
- What are you **seeking** to learn and contribute?
- What is your **personal weather status** (cloudy, foggy, sunny breaks, etc.)?
- What is one thing that you are feeling **proud of** that you would like to share with this group?
- What task or **concern** would you like to set aside so that you can fully concentrate on our work today?
- What would it take for you to be **fully present** in this room?
- Share a 1-2-word **intention** you hold for today's meeting.
- What is one thing you hope to get **accomplished** during today's meeting?
- What has become **apparent** since we last met?
- What words would you use to describe where **your head** is? Words for where **your heart** is?
- What are you willing to **set aside** to be present with this conversation?
- What is something you came across recently that gave you **hope or inspiration**?
- What is one **interest of yours** that others in this group might not know about?
- How has the last gathering **impacted** you and your work?
- What makes you **tremble** as you look ahead at the event? What worries, or fears are bubbling up in you? (For a group that has been working together for a while preparing for an event)
- If you could invite **someone you respect** to sit beside you and support you in making this meeting successful, who would they be?
- What are the **crossroads** where you find yourself at this stage of your life or work in the project around which we are assembled?

Anti-oppressive Practices

The New Mentality is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive space for all who are involved. This means that TNM applies an anti-oppression lens when working with young people, communities and systems. We acknowledge and seek to challenge, the power imbalances present in mental health organizations, service provision systems, social interactions and day-to-day life.

TNM welcomes and actively reaches out to groups of people who are traditionally marginalized from mainstream society because of their **race, religion, culture/creed, immigration status and more**. We want to create a network that is reflective of the diverse communities in Ontario.

When thinking about your **TNM Group**, you may want to consider some of the following questions.

- **Who is in your group?** Considering things like race, religion, gender identity, etc., does your group represent the broader community or region that it is a part of? If not—why?
- **How are you recruiting members?** How are you creating a safer and braver space for underrepresented or marginalized individuals to join? Is the group functioning in a way that might feel tokenizing to people?
- **How can your group include more diverse voices in its work?**

Disclosing your pronouns is never required.



Here is an example of an anti-oppressive practice that our groups do:

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

At TNM events and meetings, we typically begin with introductions and ask everyone to say their name, pronouns (if they wish,) and answer a check-in question. In addition, at events where we have name tags, we put our pronouns on the name tag.

The intention of this practice is to **create an inclusive environment for everyone in the room** and ensure we are not making assumptions about anyone's gender identity. Youth and allies should always be mindful of using the correct pronouns when referring to those who choose to disclose them, whether their pronouns are gendered (i.e. she/her, he/him) or gender-neutral (i.e. they/them, ze/zir.)

At The New Mentality, we want to ensure that everybody feels **safe and comfortable** when sharing their **authentic selves** with the group. **That being said, disclosing your pronouns is never required.** Sharing one's pronouns can be deeply personal and as such, groups should always give their members the right to refrain from telling them to the group.

ACKNOWLEDGING SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

Canada was founded on **unceded Indigenous territory** and has a long history of colonialism. **Colonialism** involves a nation or people in power seeking to extend or retain their authority over other peoples and their territories. This is motivated by the colonizers' intention to develop and exploit these peoples and their land to their own benefit.

Canada's own colonialist legacy involves European settlers colonizing Indigenous people and their territories. Other settlers in Canada may be colonized peoples as well, including those with African, Asian, Caribbean, Pacific Islander and/or South American backgrounds.

We encourage you to seek further training on anti-oppressive practices and apply them to your group's conversations and projects.

Colonialism is still very present today; it lives on in current political and economic policies, cultural institutions, social interactions and the contemporary and intergenerational trauma of colonized people. These effects overflow into our **social infrastructure** and unconsciously impact our norms, prejudices, personhood and other aspects of our lives through institutionalized racism and oppression.

Colonialism is so deeply ingrained in North American culture that these impacts may at first be invisible to individuals of both **colonized and non-colonized** backgrounds. Our conversations at TNM must therefore be aware and critical of the oppressive perceptions and behaviours we may engage in due to their normalization under the dominant culture of colonizers.

HAVING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT EQUITY & INCLUSION

We need to actively acknowledge how colonialism still thrives within the ongoing systemic racism and oppression present in the world. Your group can do this by creating spaces for reflection on how these oppressive systems show up in daily life led by analyses from colonized people with lived experience of marginalization and exclusion. Although these conversations can be difficult, they allow for the **exploration of identity**, a reflection on one's personal biases and a better understanding of how to contribute to equitable and inclusive environments.

Below are some general guidelines and things to consider when engaging in conversations about marginalization, equity and inclusion.

- **Be aware of making counterclaims, denouncements, or otherwise expressing your surprise or disbelief at someone else's lived reality.** The absence of certain forms of oppression in your own life is not evidence that it does not exist in others'.
- **Be aware of asking questions that stem from unconscious entitlement.** It is not the job of someone who experiences oppression to prove that it exists, nor is it their responsibility to explain it or justify their reality to you.
- **Be aware of making offensive comments.** It can help to create a collective agreement that defines safe statements to use in your group. **Refer to the Brave Space facilitation technique.**

Practice being quiet. What is the purpose of what you are sharing or want to share? Who is it for? Can you give someone else space for their reality to be at the centre?

- Your truth can coexist with someone else's. You, your experiences and your realities do not disappear when someone else is sharing their truth. You do not need to compare your experiences to prove they are real.

Keep in mind: *Practicing something new will always feel awkward and uncomfortable at first—sometimes to the point of seeming too hard altogether. That is okay! It is important to check in with yourself about whether what you're feeling is comfort-related or safety-related.*