

CREATING THE CONTAINER FOR CHANGE – ‘BRAVE SPACES’ READING

PURPOSE: To create a space that gives permission for people to be vulnerable. Being vulnerable creates productive conversations and reduces the effect of power dynamics.

CONTEXT: We are all nervous about getting it wrong or being embarrassed by publicly showing our ignorance, yet as we will all get it wrong in the shared space we need to be willing to take the risk. We all have different levels of tolerance to emotion and conflict, particularly strong emotion and strong conflict. Historically the shared space has brought with it often unacknowledged generational trauma, and many white leaders have difficulty taking up their power in the shared space from fear of reproducing the abuse or harm that has already been perpetrated. This fear can lead to paralysis or neglect of power and doesn't help make progress. Being able to own your fear, whilst holding personal responsibility for your own work, can help you become unstuck and shows vulnerability. Safety ultimately relies on awareness of roles and power dynamics and what it takes to share power.

INSTRUCTIONS: Extend to the group the invitation to a “brave space”. A Brave space recognizes that there is no such thing as safe spaces in our communities. We all have the potential to hurt others and be hurt ourselves. If we are to move forward toward a more loving vision of what we can be, we must do it together. It will require vulnerability and courage. Perhaps, most poignantly, it will require the risk of saying yes to the unfamiliar for a chance at the transformational. To embody this orientation toward brave space, we open each meeting with a poem (written by Micky ScottBey Jones) that captures why this work is so important and embodies an ethic of radical hospitality.

Together we will create *brave space*
 Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”
 We exist in the real world
 We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
 In this space
 We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
 We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
 We call each other to more truth and love
 We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
 We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
 We will not be perfect.
 This space will not be perfect.
 It will not always be what we wish it to be
 But
 It will be *our brave space together,*
and
 We will work on it *side by side.*