

ACCOUNTABILITY¹

Can look/feel an infinite number of ways but strives to accomplish the following:

- ◆Addresses root causes of violence and oppression
- ◆Offers options/follow-up/process
- ◆Needs active participation
- ◆Gives space for different values/framework
(letting people engage in a way that is comfortable for them)
- ◆Supports resilience and survival
- ◆Based on relationship-building
- ◆Accountability is different from compliance
- ◆Economy to hold folks accountable

More thoughts on Accountability:

- ◆When someone whom we know cares about and respects us reminds us of something we both value, that is helpful accountability.
- ◆We have experienced some confusion between accountability and self-righteousness. We have witnessed it, perpetrated it, and received it. Sometimes people say it is accountability but it is done without love/compassion and actually silences people. It is tricky.
- ◆People need to want to be active participants for it to work. It has been successful for us when people acknowledge that there was a problem.
- ◆Accountability begins with trust and mutual respect. With youth, they have to know and experience that you authentically care about them before you can even begin to build accountability.
- ◆Accountability allows people to better understand who they are and why they do the things they do. It's important for personal growth and needed to create safe spaces.
- ◆Doing what you say you will. Trusting others to do the same.
- ◆Ingredients: thoughtful process, asking why, how will we grow, how does this feel, taking ownership over personal actions and reactions.

ANTI-OPPRESSION

Anti-oppression work is an ongoing, intersectional struggle for liberation that uses collective and individual understandings of privilege, power, and violence to transform and heal ourselves, our communities, and the world.

¹ Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks

COMMUNITY²

A group of people with something in common – location, space, interest, birth, religion, life experience, identity – who may or may not identify as part of that community, and may willingly—or against their will and/or without their knowledge—be considered part of that community.

More thoughts on accountability:

- ◆ We think power and control are always factors when more than one person gathers, especially within community. Ideally, those who are in power are willing/strong enough to negotiate with others/ those with less power, how they'd like power to play out.
- ◆ Being open to learn about and with each other compassionately and without judgment.
- ◆ Community is more than one person. People in a region, space, or area sharing time and experiences. Not always alike, not always with similar interests or goals, yet found in their community because of some commonality.
- ◆ Community is built through commonalities and differences among people, but most importantly a shared trust and commitment to honesty. Being each other's keepers.
- ◆ Community can be geographic, totally abstract, or forced.
- ◆ 1) Being in the same space (real or virtual) – having intersecting interests, concerns.
2) How are decisions made? Is there a dominant leader, organizer, or planner?
3) Gather, time, patience, trust.
- ◆ Community is a group of people with a common something. Power and control can impact community when hierarchy, oppression, or violence happens.

² Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks

CONSEQUENCES³

We also participated in a values exercise based on the following statement:
I believe that consequences are an important part of creating safe space.

Some of these questions emerged:

- ◆ Do some of the space's consequences devised to reinforce the status quo?
- ◆ Is it possible for us to create consequences based on both individual and community-wide contexts?
- ◆ What would objective, fair, and just consequences look like? We agreed that this would be an individualized process that includes room for growth and a long-term process to create accountability. One size consequences—even though they may be easier to consistently enforce—do no work within a trauma-informed, harm reduction, and anti-oppression framework.

The role of consequences:

- ◆ Consequences can increase buy-in, promote safe space, and create opportunities for young people to learn and share in the community accountability and/or individual accountability process.
- ◆ Consequences occur naturally, sometimes unanimously based on the cultural norms or expectations of the community.
- ◆ Consequences are the reaction to what has happened—which includes a discussion, reality-testing, and dialogue.

HARM REDUCTION

This framework intentionally, holistically, and creatively supports us exactly where we are, without preconceived expectations of success, while recognizing the impact of violence on our lives and communities.

We value harm reduction practices that

- ◆ **AFFIRM** the expertise, self-determination, and experiences of young people.
- ◆ **DEEPEN** our understandings of the ways in which individuals and communities experience risks, oppression, and violence—and the evolving ways we resist.
- ◆ **CREATE** accountability through intentional and youth-led relationship building.
- ◆ **PROVIDE** an array of options so that individuals can make informed decisions, guide their own healing process, and practice/teach harm reduction in their own lives and communities.

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LOW-THRESHOLD

We value the importance of personal and informal engagement with young people that provides a quick and easy access to a wide array of services without traditional institutional barriers.

MULTI-THRESHOLD

In contrast to low-threshold programs—programs that work to reduce barriers for increased accessibility (e.g. a program that provides basic needs and does not require participants to have identification cards, to abstain from drug or alcohol use, or engage in mandatory multi-hour intakes)—multi-threshold program models advocate for both low-threshold access as well as ongoing opportunities typically considered to be higher threshold (e.g. organized sports, programming that requires multi-week participation, or trainings that lead to a graduation ceremony). Once a relationship develops between the program and the participant, other thresholds become available, at any given time, for a participant to access as needs, experiences, and identities shift or change over time.

In multi-threshold settings, participants have opportunities to choose from a range of programming—some of which may involve short or long-term commitments, expectations for participation, and community accountability practice work. Multi-threshold program models reflect values of harm reduction—meeting us where we are at as our lives, needs, and desires change and shift.

ORGANIZING⁴

Organizing structures a community around a common passion, idea, or interest. By building bridges between concepts of people, creating safe space, visibility, understanding of self, and having voices heard, organizing embodies a community's commitments.

- ◆ Organizing is a way for folks to get embodied/learn/create community/process/deepen ourselves and our relationships with others/ talk about individual and larger issues/system stuff.
- ◆ People have different priorities and concepts of safe and the space can only be safe for everyone if a community with those insights, values, and commitments is organized.
- ◆ To develop structure and to create a common ground; successful techniques could be consistency, common agreements, and fairness.
- ◆ Organizing is creating community. Organizing because often accountability, community, safe space, etc. do not exist or occur because there is no idea of connecting people to each other, which is needed to create growth among people.
- ◆ Organizing leads to community, accountability, and safe space. Discussion and people's voices being used and heard.
- ◆ Help people define for themselves what they are passionate about and what issues, ideas, people they want to organize around together.
- ◆ Organizing lends to visibility which can connect people and create community.
- ◆ Organizing creates and builds on relationships. The bond of accomplishing even small victories together is huge. What the important issues to youth? ASK THEM! Help them if they ask but let them figure out what they want to do and how.

SAFE SPACE

Defining safe space is challenging because ideas of safety are self-determined. Some youth workers do not believe that safety exists at all. A small group of youth workers defined safe space as being part of the whole by being able to separate into parts.

Other definitions included:

- ◆ Safety to make mistakes, to learn, to be forgiven, to have reconciliation, to receive grace.
- ◆ Safety to explore your identity and space to change.
- ◆ A space where you can be yourself, learn about yourself and others without violating the agreements made for the space.
- ◆ Safe space doesn't mean you can't be challenging or critical
- ◆ Exists when there is community buy-in around values of safety
- ◆ A place where there is room to explore every part of what makes who you are
- ◆ Being able to bring your whole self – all various and incomplete parts of you and knowing that you are welcome and respected and that you have room to be and be incomplete and in process.
- ◆ A place where there is freedom to have one's voice and speak without negative consequences or loss of self
- ◆ Means that there is a consciousness – that the veil has been lifted and it is acknowledged that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression DO in fact exist and there is a conscious effort by all to fight oppression.
- ◆ Safe space = my space, my home, surrounded by me, my creativity, my visions, art, music, food, NO JUDGEMENTS, no explanations.

YOUTH CONTROL COMPLEX

A system in which schools, police, probation officers, families, community centers, the media, businesses, and other institutions systemically treat young people's everyday behaviors as criminal activity.