



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

WYSE TRAINING COMPONENT 5:

Diversity and Cultural Awareness

Contents:

Brave Space Guidelines.....	
Nurturing the Mentor-Mentee Relationship.....	
Activity: Understanding Safe Spaces.....	



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

BRAVE SPACE GUIDELINES FOR CONSCIOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SENSITIVE TOPICS

Mentor Training Component: 5. Diversity and Cultural Awareness

WYSE supports the following recommendations for **participants of a group discussion** to follow when talking about **divisive topics**. These guidelines can help make participants feel more comfortable expressing personal thoughts or opinions that they **perceive to be outside the norm** and create a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

1. **Be welcoming.** Set the tone for the conversation. Create a physical space where all feel welcome and safe. Use inclusive body language and actively invite perspectives from all participants. Challenge jokes and statements that are perceived to be hurtful or offensive, or be supportive of people who do.
2. **Be aware.** Acknowledge that all participants are at different points on a journey of learning and growing. Validate and support the ideas, feelings, or experiences of others. Be aware that your emotions may impact others based on their experiences. Be mindful of sexually charged topics, language, and perceived behavior as we all come from different cultural and life experiences and have different boundaries.
3. **Strive to learn.** Listen to those who have different experiences than your own. Seek permission to ask questions about other people's experiences, e.g. "*Would you be willing to tell me more about...*" Avoid attacking or debating the validity of someone else's experiences.
4. **Always ask questions.** Seek to engage in critical dialogue through conscious questioning and active listening. Before reacting or responding to jokes or statements you feel are hurtful or offensive to yourself or others, ask for clarification, e.g. "*What I heard you say is... Is that correct?*"
5. **Avoid generalizing.** Recognize that your experiences, values, etc. are unique and avoid generalizing. Similarly, avoid language that assumes all people are in the majority (e.g. heterosexual, white, abled, cisgendered, Judeo-Christian, Republican/Democrat) and avoid stereotyping based on assumptions.
6. **Practice forgiveness.** Remember that this is a space where we are all learning and growing. While all are expected to make their best effort to be respectful, there is an understanding that someone may say something that results in unintentional offense and hurt feelings for those around. A primary assumption of Brave Space is that everyone speaks with the positive intent of seeking greater knowledge and understanding.



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

Nurturing the Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Mentor Training Component: 5. Diversity and Cultural Awareness

Open Doors-Broaden Horizons: A popular Special Event that most WYSE branches host for mentees is a field trip to the college campus. Many of them have never seen a college or know what "college life" is all about, so clue them in. Show them where you live. Take them to your favorite coffee house and place to eat. Invite your mentee to a campus function. If you work on or near campus, take them there and explain what you do. Expose your mentee to a whole new world!

Share Cultural Differences and Similarities: Get to know your mentees culture, even if you both come from a similar background, and especially if you don't. Young people are often very curious individuals, so they will want to know your background as well. Use this conversation to build trust and learn more about one another.

Demonstrate Dependability: Set realistic expectations for your relationship. Don't make commitments you cannot keep. Proving that you follow through on your commitments and are consistent will help build trust between you and your mentee.

Don't Dominate, Collaborate: Always include your mentee in decision-making. When choosing an outside activity, ask her what she would want to do and work together to come up with an appropriate activity. Value her opinions and validate her feelings.

Mentors Are Uniquely Trusted: You are an adult figure, yet you are not perceived as an authority figure. This role is exactly what helps create a trusting relationship between a mentee and mentor. Don't breach this trust. If there is something you absolutely need to breach, inform your mentee of your plans to tell someone.

Validate Confusion: There is a lot of confusion for young women during their adolescent and teenage years. Peer pressure, sexuality and insecurity to name a few. It is important as a mentor to validate these feelings to your mentee. You may be one of the few people she can talk with about these issues.

Avoid Massive Disclosure: Your mentee may be curious about your lifestyle, family, significant others, etc. She may ask very personal questions, so it is important to take caution. Disclosing too much information about your personal life is not advisable. Instead, focus on the issue and ask her why she is so curious about a particular issue.



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

ACTIVITY: Understanding Safe Spaces

Mentor Training Component: 5. Diversity and Cultural Awareness

Objectives:

To aid mentor understanding of exactly what makes a space safe.
 Help mentors understand how they should behave when in WYSE spaces, and encourage them to make every space a safe space.

You will need to supply:

- 4 Principles of a Safe Space printout
- Things That Make Us Feel Safe and Unsafe printout (these printouts are on the following pages)

Directions:

- Put mentors into pairs or small groups and have them discuss these lists, especially the most important qualities of them.
- Mentors can circle the ones that they think are most important, ones that they don't understand, or add characteristics that they think are missing from what makes a safe space.
- After 5-10 minutes, have mentors come back together as a group and lead a discussion on what makes a safe space, and why it is important in WYSE.

Sample Debrief Questions:

- What characteristics of safe spaces do you think are most important? Why?
- Why is it important that WYSE is a safe space?
- How can we work to ensure that WYSE is a safe space?

TAKEAWAYS:

- Mentors must understand what makes a safe space, and why it is important that WYSE is a safe space for mentors and mentees.



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

ACTIVITY: Understanding Safe Spaces

➤ The Four Principles of a SAFE SPACE

Mentor Training Component: 5. Diversity and Cultural Awareness

Equalize the Space

Confidentiality – share stories and experiences, not names and gossip– give space before you take space, and challenge yourself to step out of your pattern value and encourage risk taking, while maintaining everyone’s right to pass challenge the idea or the practice, not the person. Everyone has equal worth in this discussion, and all knowledge and opinions are equally valid.

Check Your Assumptions

No judgments or disclaimers (including self-judgments)
 Maintain gender neutrality in your language, and inquire about preferred pronouns
 treat everyone as an individual and not a representative of any specific group
 Personalize your knowledge, don’t project it (i.e. use I statements)
 Believe in our common best intentions

The Right to be Human

We all have the right to be human (i.e. inconsistent, emotional, triggered, etc.)
 Avoid blaming people for the misinformation taught to them
 Acknowledge emotions
 Practice forgiveness

Practice Consensual Dialogue

Active listening – attention focused, maintain appropriate eye contact, check your body language, take breaks only when you need to
 Silence is okay – an unforced pace of dialogue is one into which people can step-up safely
 Be sincere and consistent, practicing respectful honesty



OUR MISSION: Women and Youth Supporting Each Other empowers young women by providing the resources and support necessary to make positive life choices and create community change.

ACTIVITY: Understanding Safe Spaces

➤ Things that Make Us Feel Safe/Unsafe

Mentor Training Component: 5. Diversity and Cultural Awareness

Things That Make Us Feel Safe	Things That Make Us Feel Unsafe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom to speak openly • Knowing I have a buddy • Open communication • Freedom to not speak • Making space for people to speak • Acceptance that everyone has their own opinions • Honesty • Willingness to recognize each other's triggers/how we get triggered • Taking responsibility • Love & Acceptance • Laughter & Crying • Willingness to call each other out & be called out • Critique of ideas, not of people • Affirmation of people • Mutual understanding of confidentiality • Fun • Empathy • Talking about how to facilitate these activities in other groups • Ability to leave • Ability to call a time out, if needed • Opportunities to check in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats • Assumptions about my motives and/or intentions • Expectation to conform; be involved in group think • Using position of power to dominate a situation • Being touched without permission • Problems aren't brought to group's attention but discussed in small groups • Passive aggression • Using exclusive language • Unnecessary yelling • Hard drug use; excessive alcohol • Resentment • Judgment • Aggressive body language • Loud noises • Very vocal negativity/absolutes • Guilt tripping

Source: Berkeley Student Cooperative, <https://www.bsc.coop/index.php/fall-waiting-list-guide/10-members-resources/128-health-safety-safe-spaces>