



Creating a framework of trust

Type of tool: collaborative tool

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Created by : colibri association

Duration (if relevant): it depends on the size of the group and the depth of the reflection

Targeted audience: youth and organizations

Number of participants : flexible

Number of facilitators: from 1 to 3 depending on the size of the group

Material :

- Printed or displayed **framework of trust** (visible or distributed copies)
- **Manual signaling system** (e.g., hand-raising or gestures to indicate adoption)
- Space to **display the framework** (whiteboard, wall, easel)

DESCRIPTION

This tool outlines key principles to create a framework of trust, essential for open and respectful group dialogue.

It promotes active listening, kindness, shared responsibility, and equality among participants. The framework is co-constructed, adaptable to the context, and can evolve over time.

The facilitator plays a key role in ensuring the framework is respected.

Individual or group-level constraints help support inclusive and balanced participation.

PART 1

Objective

During an event, the groups that form have a brief... yet intense existence! No matter the lifespan of the group you are asked to facilitate, it is recommended to collectively adopt a set of principles that promote the freedom of speech of each individual, in service of reflection or the action to be taken. These principles create a structured and safe framework within which everyone can freely share their thoughts and viewpoints. This applies to both small and large groups, whether for a family or friends discussion, facilitating a working group, or leading a debate, with people known or unknown to each other.

Expressing oneself, fully investing, and thus engaging in exchange and debate primarily requires trust.

To facilitate the building of this trust, each person needs a minimum level of security, for themselves, in relation to the group and their place within it.

Bringing awareness and words to what each individual needs to feel safe allows for the co-construction of this framework. It is a tool that appeals to the responsibility of each person.

Elements to build the framework of trust

Important: there is no one-size-fits-all trust framework applicable to every situation.

The trust framework must be built each time. There are basic elements that can inspire your proposal to the group. The group can enrich or modify it over time.

- Establishing a Relationship of Equality

The diversity of each person's experiences, interpersonal skills, and know-how is an asset to the group. Everyone has a place -their place- in the group. Each person is accepted as they are, with who they are. There is no hierarchy; there are simply people with different life paths.

- Listening Attentively

To avoid reacting and to make room for everyone's full expression, we recommend active listening. This means listening carefully and fully to what the person says, then paraphrasing to ensure correct understanding of what was expressed. It is therefore not about "reacting" immediately but "expressing" oneself only when it is their turn to speak.

- Speaking with Intention and Concision

Each participant is invited to speak in their own name using "I" and to avoid phrases like "people think that." We don't always have something to say, and in that case, silence is useful: we always have the option to pass and say nothing. Taking responsibility for one's speech or silence is already a big step.

- Being Kind and Respectful

Everyone is invited not to judge others, themselves, or the ideas proposed.

There are no good or bad ideas. Indeed, an idea considered "bad" by some may well be the trigger for the solution found by the group.

PART 2

- Trusting

It means trusting oneself, daring to follow one's intuition, daring to express one's knowledge and/or feelings, trusting others, the process, and the facilitator.

What happens is what could happen: hyperactive moments, silences, some people's statements, others' questions all enrich the common pot, "the center," to co-construct what needs to be done.

- Acting with Sovereignty

Everyone is responsible for what they wish to share, do, not do, what happens to them, the emotions they experience, making requests, asking questions, and taking care of their needs.

- Co-responsibility

Everyone is responsible for respecting this framework, not only the facilitator.

- Fostering a Non-Partisan Debate

Confusion between apolitical and non-partisan is widespread. Apoliticism means not taking a stance on any societal or public life issues. Quite a challenge! Non-partisanship, on the other hand, means not supporting any political party.

Points of caution

Be aware that these elements do not constitute a miracle solution.

Indeed, the framework of trust does not guarantee flawless and problem-free functioning. The rules and boundaries set do not prevent deliberate or accidental transgressions.

A framework of trust is not intended to avoid conflict or erase our differences, which are the source of a group's evolution and part of its richness.

It provides a document that everyone can refer to when debating and deciding together on a transgression.

It enables one to dare to approach and navigate conflict zones with greater calm and comfort rather than avoiding them. A group, to evolve, remain creative and alive, needs these conflicts as a source of energy and movement.

It may be useful to revisit the proposed framework with the participants present, welcoming spontaneous reformulations to enhance collective understanding and agreement. The framework is not rigid: it can evolve, the essential point being that it is validated and agreed upon by all.

How to Establish a Framework of Trust

Several options are available depending on the size of the group and your comfort in facilitating a public debate space.

Between 10 and 30 people

- Propose a trust framework to the assembled group,
- Ask if there is a need to clarify a principle, term, or concept—and of course respond to expressed needs
- Ask if anyone wishes to add a principle
- Check if there is opposition within the group,
- Have the framework adopted
- Display it so that it is accessible to all

PART 3

Beyond 30 people, this first proposal would be too time-consuming and might initiate a debate within the debate, potentially creating frustration within the group and unfavorable conditions for the smooth running of the program.

Thus, we present three ways to proceed:

- Read the proposed framework of trust
- Invite the group to operate with these principles by default, while indicating that the framework may be enriched or modified if the debates reveal a need
- Check if there is opposition within the group
- Have the framework adopted: sign language (waving hands) can be useful to obtain a signal from the individuals present and engage them
- Display it so that it is accessible to all

OR

- Display the framework of trust very visibly (projection, panels distributed in the room)
- Read the proposed framework of trust
- Invite the group to operate with these principles by default, while indicating that the framework may be enriched or modified if the debates reveal a need
- Check if there is opposition within the group
- Have the framework adopted: sign language (waving hands) can be useful to obtain a signal from the individuals present and engage them

OR

- Distribute paper copies
- Initiate a collective reading (volunteers each read a paragraph) of the proposed framework of trust
- Invite the group to operate with these principles by default, while indicating that the framework may be enriched or modified if the debates reveal a need
- Check if there is opposition within the group
- Have the framework adopted by asking each participant to sign the document and symbolically hand it to the center of the circle, to their neighbor, etc., as appropriate.

Facilitator's responsibility and role

The facilitator is the guardian of the framework and ensures it is respected by all.

If the framework is not respected, they may interrupt the discussion.

They are responsible for managing the flow of speech so that everyone can express themselves with confidence and without fear. The trust framework and the constraints described below are tools that should allow the facilitator to:

- limit the speaking time of those for whom speaking is easy or important, and who may otherwise monopolize the conversation;
- ensure favorable conditions for those for whom speaking is difficult—or even unthinkable—so they, too, can access the floor.

This responsibility is a key point that requires the facilitator to be comfortable with holding this role and its accountability. It is a temporary authority, valid only during the facilitation, which may need to be reaffirmed during the session—not with authoritarianism, but by gently bringing the group back to the shared agreement made at the outset

PART 4

To do this and in connection with the elements that make up the trust framework, the facilitator translates the framework into constraints that will serve as markers for the facilitation. These constraints are what give each person enough confidence to participate, and possibly to speak up.

Not all constraints need to be applied every time. They should be chosen according to the context of the session, the group size, etc.

Examples of individual-level constraints:

- Limit each person's speaking time
- Use a talking stick (or object passed around to manage turns)
- Set a maximum number of times each person may speak
- Encourage the use of "I" statements
- Etc.

Examples of group-level constraints:

- Alternate speakers based on different characteristics: age, gender, etc.
- Shift from argument-based expression ("my thoughts are structured, I present an argument") to feeling-based expression ("I express what I feel on the subject, the emotions I'm experiencing") and/or personal testimony ("I share what I've experienced regarding the subject, or what I've heard")
- And any other measures that help promote fluid and equitable speaking opportunities