*Ella Cooper

We are ready to begin. Today we will be chatting about equity centred facilitation practices and the art of creating safe space. Join us for the next hour with your questions, insights and best practices. Let's create a supportive online learning space for each other today. Nadia Chaney, Naty Tremblay, Hussein Janmohamed, Claire Gemmill, Metta Paterson, Khari McClelland, Gwyn Wansbrough, Peggy Taylor, Peggy Lam, Rup Sidhu, Eva Micelle Adams-Hart, Mocheko J. Nkoana, Xoli Fuyani, Charlie Murphy, Thomas Arndt, Adam Rosendahl, Justin Silbaugh, Sagesse Gwinn Graham, Melanie Schambach

Amber Hescock Johnson love this photo--so serene

> Ella Cooper Thanks this was taken a film camp for young Black women in Toronto that I founded in partnership with Reel Youth & the Nia Centre for the Arts

Mercedes Calcaño So sorry I missed it!. I am new to PYE and this Facebook group. How does it work? How do you hold your meetings?

Partners for Youth Empowerment

Amber Hescock Johnson Hello Mercedes Calcaño and Khanh Nguyen--welcome! So glad you found us. I'm PYE's communications director. We hold our assemblies here on this page on the 3rd Thursday of the month, exploring different topics aimed at increasing our impact in leading groups (unlocking creativity and potential in group members). We are exploring other interactive platforms but for now, we do them all in text -- as in the lead facilitator simply posts questions and prompts here and everyone discusses in the comments. I hope to see you next month! PYE (a non-profit) also offers in-depth in-person trainings for teachers, youth workers and group leaders. More info on our site at pyeglobal.org. Feel free to message me with any questions.

een going to trai
) years, and this   PYE Global - Partners for Youth Empowerment
I've been waiting   pyeglobal.org
er, South Korea

Mercedes Calcaño Ok Amber, thanks

Khanh Nguyen Thank you

Khanh Nguyen Me too. How do I join the meetings? I'm in California and would love to listen and learn.

*Ella Cooper

Goals

1) Share Best Practices on Creating Safe Space
2) Share Insights & Stories that help to strengthen our work as facilitators
3) Explore the Links between Equity, Creative Risk and Safe space

Agreements

) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.
2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully
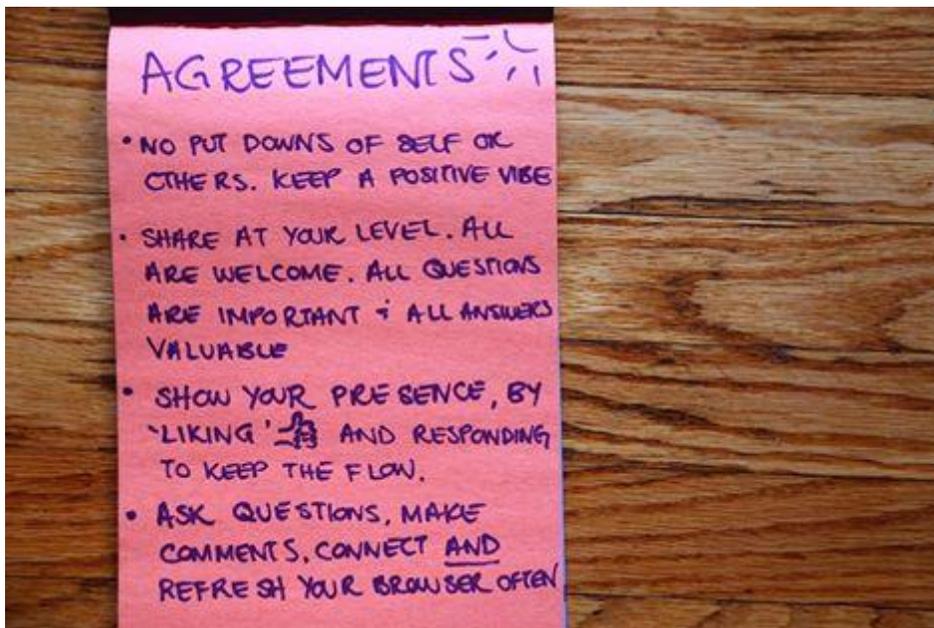
disagree with each other.

3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often.

Partners for Youth Empowerment

Amber Hescock Johnson be sure to refresh everyone -- the check-in has been posted

*Ella Cooper

Ok, let's begin by sharing your name, your preferred gender pronoun and one thing you would like to bring to or gain from the discussion today.

Ella Cooper Amber Hescock Johnson, Meredith Stone

Amber Hescock Johnson she/her -- i'd like to gain more awareness of how i affect other people's sense of safety with my tone / behavior

> Ella Cooper Thanks Amber can you be more specific? Is there a group or program you have in mind?

> Amber Hescock Johnson I sometimes lead groups of children--I wonder how to draw out the introverts or at least make them feel comfortable

Virtually Ally Good Morning. My name is Ally. PGP=she/her. I would like to receive wisdom from the group about how to keep the room safe & flowing when a small group of teens continue to go out of our community agreement (by talking over others, being disrespectful).

Ella Cooper Great questions...

Nadia Chaney Hi! It's Nadia...I'm about to hop on a plane, but I will check the transcript when I land...have a great convo!

Meredith Stone Hello! She/her. I'm interested in creating multicultural, culturally relevant and responsive environments for my youth.

Ella Cooper These are great starting points!

Sola Story Hashima he/him: the power of story to create change...

[Kitty Jackson](#) Hi everyone, I am Kitty - her/ she. Today I would love connect with other facilitators and share knowledge with amazing minds around the world

[Nkululeko Clesio](#) Hello everybody! I am he... good evening! I would love to contribute and share about youth empowerment!

[Ella Cooper](#) Welcome ☺

[Gwyn Wansbrough](#) Hi everyone - I am starting from the beginning I am Gwyn her/she. I'm interested in hearing people's experiences in creating safe spaces in groups

[Nkululeko Clesio](#) I had recently am experience in one group of young people, that we started our first meeting in a circle and all the adults sitting, one by one for 10 minutes, were intereiewed by the youth!

      [Ella Cooper](#) Fun and great way of giving the youth an opportunity to lead.

[Nkululeko Clesio](#) That was amazing! And this started good energy and conection with them! But the rules were no ofensive questions! And not to much intimate... but the adults needed to answer the truth!

[Arindita Gogoi](#) Hi! Sorry to have joined in late ☹ I am Arindita, my preferred gender pronoun is she/her. And I am here to learn from the multitude of experiences here and figure out if there is any impact of culture on concepts that we discuss.

*[Ella Cooper](#)

Ok so we have a few different interests in the 'room' right now.

How we can work to shape tone/behaviour to create safe space as facilitators.

How we can continue to maintain safe space after community agreements have been broken

Partners for Youth Empowerment

How we can bring greater awareness to multicultural spaces that are responsive and relevant to culturally diverse youth....does this sound about right?

Is there any thing else those of you just joining us would like to add?

Ella Cooper And Sola Story has added the 'Power of Story to Make Change' : Sola, welcome!, can you give some examples?

Virtually Ally Ways to introduce the PGP to the group via an activity and what to do if a child is misgendered. Also, isn't it important to allow a child to "pass" if they don't wish to offer a PGP?

Sola Story For example the way in which activities such as the river of life facilitate deep reflection...

Ella Cooper Virtually Ally personally I love to share the Genderbread diagram when there is time to unpack PGP http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/.../the-genderbread.../ Also...

The Genderbread Person v3 | It's Pronounced Metrosexual

itspronouncedmetrosexual.com

Ella Cooper Also, in a large group when introducing PGP, many facilitators like to explain the reason why we ask this question and give an example of the different pronouns that people often like to use to help us avoid making assumptions about each other. Also, you can always welcome the notion that your PGP can change over the course of a year, workshop, etc and that this is also welcome.

Virtually Ally Ella Cooper I look forward to to reviewing the Genderbread resource & appreciate your comments. Thank you.

Silvia Giovannoni Webster Hi all. I'm on the move but hope to join soon one thing that's been on my mind is how to create safety in groups where people know each other well and have perhaps established patterns of realting/being withr or where there's hierarchy. How can they feel safe to experience new aspects of themselves? Hope this makes sense. Have a great convo.

Virtually Ally Silvia Giovannoni Webster Yes! It makes sense to me!! I was recently with a group that has been working together for years (almost like a lovable dysfunctional family) Everyone was very good at playing their roles and keeping each other in a box!! And one or two folks kept everyone in their place. Would love to hear from others who have experienced this and how they approached it!!

Kitty Jackson That;s a great question Sil - changing pattern behaviour can be the hardest. I had a conversation with a group of facilitators around Christmas time and around the idea that no matter how much we all grow during the year, we all revert to type when home for the holidays

Claire Gemmill This is great and I love the idea of introducing PGP when working with communities - helps to build a strong foundation for a safe space if everyone feels like they are respected and identified according to their true selves!

Ella Cooper Hmm, some really interesting reflections on how to address power dynamic and dysfunctional patterns that might crop up in a group...I love coming in as an outside facilitator in these instances it can be so much easier to shift the space when you are not directly wound up in it. I like offering the group the opportunity to experience new perspectives and or roles, allowing our time together to refresh our relationships and listen to each other more fully and support each other in taking greater creative risk (and explain the benefits of this). The CF 2 4 Way 'listening' game could be really great for this. Silvia Giovannoni Webster what did you end up doing for the group and would others like to add their insights on how they manage group dynamics?

Sola Story Stories especially personal ones are Windows into the emotional life of individuals and groups. To get to deep sharing we like to turn up the temperature slowly, perhaps with community builders like milling exercises and then games like 'yes and...' Or sensitivity lines... Once group trust is established, deeper level stories can be invited...

Ella Cooper Most definitely Sola, it's beautiful how everything can unfold when your intentions are clear.

Claire Gemmill I would also like to dig a bit deeper into the third question posed about working with multicultural spaces, and in relation to your newest comment Ella about shifting power in already established groups. At my work place, a colleague approached me about facilitating one, or a series of, story telling sessions. There are many dynamics at play here - South Africa is quite a politically charged country, racism is prevalent, our team is very diverse coming from a plethora of socio-economic backgrounds. As a team, the majority are passionate about human rights and quite politically aware (and opinionated). My question is how to approach a story telling session where colleagues are able to speak about where they come from, and be respected by their colleagues whom they are already established with - and how do I facilitate this as something we have not yet explored? My thought is that I need to create the space first before diving into stories that could be quite deep

Sola Story Yes and... When your ego is not leading...

Claire Gemmill I think Sola Story just answered my long winded question!!!

Claire Gemmill And Ella Cooper with the CF 2 4 way listening activity!!!!!

Sola Story we are all components of a big human mind map!

Ella Cooper Claire 'My life as a river' is also a beautiful group exercise to do together after building agreements and trus. Also, being clear with you intentions when asking to facilitate a space you work in and being aware of your own biases and desires, being sure to make space for all perspectives in the room.

Claire Gemmill Yes, exactly Ella Cooper - my awareness that I am part of this group, and hold biases, but also for me to jump into facilitator role where I previously have not facilitated such activities, and have their trust that I can hold the space. My feeling is that I start slow with these suggested activities, creating the space while safety an trust are being built, then build up to the story telling - this can be done over a few lunchtime sessions

Claire Gemmill And acknowledging the importance of community agreements - creating and respecting them

Hussein Janmohamed Musical stories may also be another way to set the shared space. I often will have individuals in small groups of 6-8 people bring in music that inspires them; song, instrumental, cultural, folk, sacred, secular, pop...whatever they bring that is inspiring to them. Each person plays their entire song for their group followed by a discussion, why that person brought the song, what they like about it, what are the musical elements that help tell the story of the song, who's the singer, context etc. The other members of the group can ask that individual questions about the song, and also comment on what they noticed, musical elements, lyrics, themes, etc. As each person has an opportunity to share, and the group listen, it creates a really cool space for care, understanding and 'getting to know' each other. Stories and life experiences become part of that shared musical storytelling, so to speak.

Ella Cooper Beautiful! Hussein Janmohamed & Claire Gemmill

Claire Gemmill That's a great idea Hussein Janmohamed an would certainly work well amongst our team! Thank youv

Hussein Janmohamed Another way of thinking about your being part of a group Claire Gemmill and holding biases, is to think of each person's perspectives and understanding of their social

structures as a line in a symphony or a part in a rock band. As the facilitator you seek to offer a space where those different voices can translate themselves how they see themselves, and also contribute to what some have called a 'polyphonic' texture. The voice of a facilitator adds another counterpoint to that texture.

Gwyn Wansbrough Thanks Ella for the beautiful facilitation and to the group for shedding light on creating safety - I have to go and I look forward to reading the whole transcript of this convo!

Claire Gemmill That's so beautiful Hussein Janmohamed and what an insight that gives for my example of story telling with colleagues. It will be an incredible experience for me to facilitate these sessions and interesting too - although we are all part of the group, I am Canadian and so will relate differently to the stories being told (the majority of which are South African stories). I already have a bit of an outsiders perspective, though I am still part of the group (if that makes sense)

Claire Gemmill This is almost how I see my experience for this example - connecting people through their stories, who historically, would not have had an opportunity to do so.

Claire Gemmill And checking and acknowledging my own bias in the process to try and remain neutral and focus on holding safe space

Hussein Janmohamed Hey Claire Gemmill the concept of 'reflexivity' in ethnographic research (and in other fields of knowledge) might provide some insight into this balance of subjective/objective facilitator. In a quick online search I came across this book, "Reflexive Ethnography" by Charlotte Aull Davies. Chapter 1 makes a thoughtful argument about the role of reflexivity in research. I played with the text replacing the word 'researcher' with 'facilitator' as I read, and felt that the concepts resonated aspects of our conversation today. Just for fun, a re-worked quote from the paper: Fuller recognition of the role of reflexivity eventually moves facilitators beyond naive attempts to objectify the facilitative encounter and towards an acceptance that in facilitation 'the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present and must therefore be acknowledged, explored and put to creative use' (Okely 1996b: 28).

> Claire Gemmill This is amazing Hussein Janmohamed - I did my degree in anthropology. Although I hadnt associated the concept with our previous conversation the way you have, I'm so grateful you made this connection! Time to revisit my old text books. You've inspired me on ways to further my understanding of the relationship between the two, and even consider this as topic for further research! So great to have connected and thanks to you for such light on this topic

> Hussein Janmohamed Wow Claire Gemmill. This is life! This is what Deleuze (my recent philosophy friend) might consider concept formation through the back and forth bringing is to a new place

Hussein Janmohamed It's the "what can I do with the concept" not so much even what the concept is that is exciting, isn't it? We can thank Ella Cooper for this space for questions to be explored, for sure.

Hussein Janmohamed I also walk away with more to explore! What if inspiration calls, and in the moment the perfect mixture of elements (people, space, resources, bits of concepts) arises where inspiration resonates leaving all of us richer? I am glad we connected and I look forward to hearing more about what you discover and work with!

*Ella Cooper

Ok, so before we dive into our specific juicy questions, can you share an example of time that you experienced a really safe and inclusive space. What were the key elements that made it safe for you to truly express who you are? Amber Hescock Johnson, Meredith Stone, Virtually Ally Gwyn Wansbrough, Sola Story

Ella Cooper Sola Story what are the techniques you like to do to set the stage for this deep reflection you mentioned in the other thread?

Meredith Stone Rushed trainings/workshops never feel safe (to me), so time to build trust before going too deep is a huge need. And giving enough time & thought for reflection/debriefing.

Amber Hescock Johnson I don't think I've ever really experienced that.

Ella Cooper Yes, that's a good point Meredith Stone. Rarely do we feel safe when we also feel rushed. Though interestingly creating a rushed environment is not always about the amount of time but how the facilitator is 'reacting' to the time they have with the group. I feel that that regardless of whether you have 30 minutes or 4 hours, you always want to make sure you have planned for activities that help to build trust plus reflection / debrief...

Meredith Stone Very true, Ella!

Kitty Jackson I have a particular dear group of friends who I always feel safe and secure with because I know that whatever comes out of my mouth they will say yes to it - no matter how unexpected it was.

Ella Cooper The Power of 'Yes'! Yes, and...!

Gwyn Wansbrough Some of you might remember how Shakti Butler started her session at the PYE Global gathering by making eye contact with everyone in the room - all 90 of us - it blew me away! It helped create an intimate connection with the facilitator, in a very big group where otherwise it would have been easy to have gotten "lost in the crowd"

Ella Cooper The power of eye contact and really making everyone in a room feel seen - lovely tip.

Arindita Gogoi One of the most amazing safe space experiences that I had was that of Power of Hope, Whidbey Island (2015). I was one of the volunteer facilitators and the lead facilitators Adam Rosendahl, Mutya Macatumpag and Warren Hooley and our mentor Peggy Taylor really made the entire environment so reassuring at one level by constantly taking feedback on our emotional state. At the same time, discussing our inhibitions and experiences with our co-facilitators from different countries really helped us to express ourselves freely and explore our creative ideas.

*Ella Cooper

Virtually Ally brought up a question around what do you do when a group of teens you have been working with 'break' the community agreements? Ally would you like to elaborate? Are there insights that folks would like to share in support?

Amber Hescock Johnson Limited experience here. But I know that if a kid at PYE's Power of Hope Camp is being disruptive, we might ask them if they really want to be there to sort of assess motivation and maybe get feedback from the teen about what might be pushing them away.

Virtually Ally Let's say a group of 2 or 3 students make fun of another student (during a body rhythm activity). How do you address that in the moment?

> Amber Hescock Johnson This happened at camp. A staff member didn't judge and was not harsh but said "why are you laughing? she's just expressing herself." and it worked-- the teens then felt safe themselves.

Virtually Ally Also, how do facilitators deal with students who talk over others?

Ella Cooper There are a couple things at play here. There are times with specific workshops where I will revisit the community agreements at the start of each session when there are a lot of new youth dropping in as a way of bringing people on the same page and seeing if anything needs to be updated to address issues arising in the group (plus is offers a great opportunity celebrate the group for what is 'working'). More importantly, I really work to apply a strengths based approach to feedback and vocally recognize that people who are actively supporting each other, lifting each other up, to really see the people who are making an effort to ensure that I'm not offering more of my attention to what might be deemed 'negative' behavior.

Ella Cooper For example - You can recognize how good it feels to laugh with new friends or in a group, but to be careful when it ends up hurting someone else. When students talk over each other, it's an opportunity to recognize their enthusiasm, how great it is to get so many perspective and that you'd like to be able to hear everyone 's perspectives.

Virtually Ally Ella Cooper I love your strengths based approach…"Shine a light on each other's awesomeness" "Lift each other up" "Recognize each other's gifts"…hmmm, I don't see why these cannot be added to top 5 agreements (pg 80 Catch the Fire). Thanks for the reminder to watch where I put my attention and to put the attention back on the whole group!! I appreciate your support!!

> Amber Hescock Johnson Great for parents as well -- and all relationships, yes?

*Ella Cooper

Welcome to those new folks how have joined the group conversation (Hussein Janmohamed, Claire Gemmill, Gwyn Wansbrough) feel free to share your insights and/or questions for the group as well.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Thank you!

[Claire Gemmill](#) Thanks Ella! I just jumped straight in. My name is Claire and I'm joining from Cape Town (PGP she/her)

> [Ella Cooper](#) Jump away! ☺

[Gwyn Wansbrough](#) Yes! just catching up on the convo!

*[Ella Cooper](#)

"A Safe Space is a place where anyone can relax and be able to fully express, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability.

A place where each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others." The Safe Space Network

*[Ella Cooper](#)

Wow, so many wonderful insights in one sweet hour and a half together. Thank you all for participating, you are all so inspiring and your presence in this chat is so heart warming! For our closing question, I INVITE EACH OF YOU TO OFFER THE GROUP ONE INSIGHT, ACTIVITY, RESOURCE OR QUOTE that you love to use or refer to create equitable, inclusive and safe creative spaces. Links and images are also welcome. Sola Story, Hussein Janmohamed, Claire Gemmill, Meredith Stone, Amber Hescock Johnson, Nkululeko Clesio, Kitty Jackson, Virtually Ally, Silvia Giovannoni Webster

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Ting: Chinese traditional character for 'listen'

[Hussein Janmohamed](#)
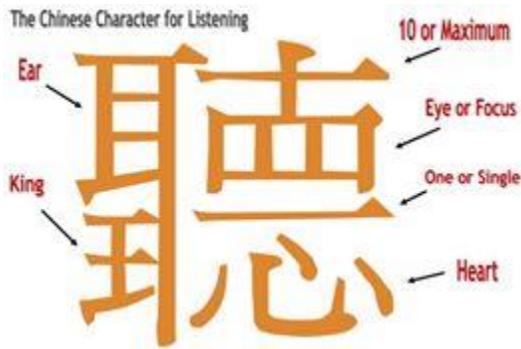
[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Thank you Ella for facilitating and creating safe space for us and so many to nurture the same in others!

[Ella Cooper](#) The power of the circle. The opportunity to see each other. Creative name tags to invite in the imagination. Learning from nature. A Welcome sign and the intention to create a space that welcomes all voices/bodies/abilities into the experience.

Ella Cooper Check out the Racial Equity Library for those of you who were commenting on bringing more culturally diverse awareness into your facilitation Meredith Stone, Claire Gemmill http://www.racialequitytools.org/home

Welcome to Racial Equity Tools • Racial Equity Tools
racialequitytools.org

Khanh Nguyen Thank you so much for sharing these resources.

Ella Cooper http://www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org/.../arts-equity...

Arts & Equity Toolkit - Neighbourhood Arts Network
neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org

Amber Hescock Johnson From Catch the Fire:

Virtually Ally "Life is like a mirror. Smile at it and it smiles back at you."
― Peace Pilgrim

Ella Cooper http://www.pyeglobal.org/.../2011/11/CCMPM-FINALflat3001.jpg
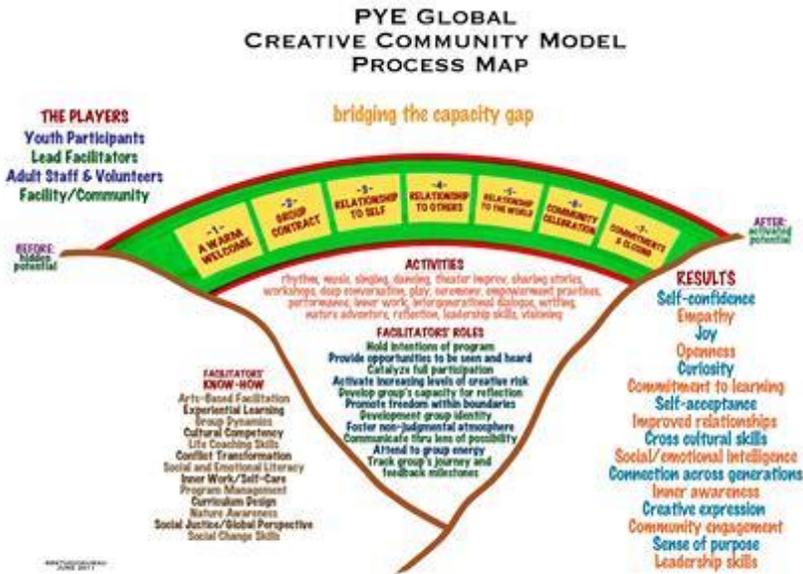
pyeglobal.org

Hussein Janmohamed Cool. Thanks Ella!

Claire Gemmill Many thanks all ▢