



## The Seven Norms of Collaborative Work (Behavior)

**Pausing:** Pausing before responding or asking a question allows for thinking and enhances dialogue, discussion and decision making.

**Paraphrasing:** Using a paraphrase that is comfortable for you: “So...” or “As you are...” or “You’re thinking...” and following the starter with a paraphrase assists the group to hear and understand each other as they formulate decisions.

**Putting inquiry at the center:** Putting inquiry at the center drives and builds on all the other norms. The intention is to explore the perceptions, assumptions, and interpretations of others before presenting or advocating one’s own ideas. This is deceptively simple in concept and emotionally challenging in practice. We live and work in an argumentative culture. In the land of point and counterpoint, inquiry changes the game for all parties and often resets the emotional thermostat to a lower temperature when things get heated. You might say, “What leads you to conclude...?” or “Can you help me understand your thinking here?” or “How would your idea affect...?”

**Probing for specificity:** Using gentle open-ended probes or inquires such as, “Please say more...” or “I’d like to hear more about...” or “Then, are you saying...?” increases the clarity and precision of the individual/group’s thinking.

**Putting ideas on the table:** Ideas are the heart of a meaningful dialogue. Label the intention of your comments. For example, you might say, “Here is one idea...” or “One thought I have is...” or “Here is a possible approach...”

**Paying attention to self and others:** Meaningful dialogue is facilitated when each group member is conscious of self and others and is aware of not only what she/he is saying, but also how it is said and how others are responding. This includes paying attention to learning style when planning for, facilitating or participating in a group. Responding to others in their own language forms is one manifestation of this norm.

**Presuming positive intentions:** Assuming that others’ intentions are positive promotes and facilitates meaningful dialogue and eliminates unintentional put-downs. Using positive intentions in your speech is one manifestation of this norm.

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Note: Norms are how we “BE” and Working Agreements and Ground Rules are how we “DO” (i.e. protocols that group develops and agrees to follow, number for a quorum, decision-making, rotation of leadership roles, start time, etc.)

