

Ten Ways to Create Protected, Community Support Space

As you plan virtual and/or in-person community support space, remember that individuals process events and circumstances very differently. Facilitators of these spaces should plan to accommodate a variety of reactions, responses and needs. In preparing opportunities for students, faculty and staff, we encourage you to consider the following guidelines:

1. Be explicit about the purpose of the space (mental health support, community dialogue, etc.) to reduce miscommunication and unintentional negative impact; identify the intended audience and communicate that information clearly;
 2. Identify specific needs (accessibility, translation, etc.) that your community/audience may have; in planning, questions like “What may prevent someone in our community from participating?” can help identify these needs;
 3. Assess organizational and personnel limitations and capacity to hold events or listening sessions. When necessary, leverage partnerships with other units — particularly those that frequently host support and care spaces;
 4. Remember that “processing” can take a variety of forms. Consider creating care spaces that incorporate techniques like journaling, artistic response, meditation and reflection, movement, etc.
 5. Smaller, more intimate, opportunities for dialogues often provide more meaningful, protected space and care options — particularly for individuals most directly affected by major incidents and events;
 6. Group interactions and discussions focused on impact situations can initiate trauma responses from individuals directly or indirectly impacted. Ensure that your space has adequate support for that possibility; when appropriate, use “trigger warnings”; describe content that some may find difficult before presenting it;
 7. Consider providing [Counseling Center](#) and/or [Faculty and Staff Assistance Program](#) (FASAP) counselor support during and/or afterwards. Please contact either resource directly to determine availability and personnel capacity to meet your group’s needs;
 8. Provide clear expectations for the space and offer “ways to engage” guidance for “allies” that support the expressed needs of individuals most directly affected;
 9. Take precautions to [protect virtual spaces](#) and avoid harmful disruptions (e.g., Zoom raids);
 10. Provide additional resource options including, but not limited to, suicide prevention information, survivor support and external community-based affinity organizations.
- See also: [Protecting Community Spaces in a Virtual World](#).