

COMMUNICATION COMMITMENTS:

1. I will speak for myself, not as a representative of a group. I will not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group. I will make “I” statements rather than “we” or “you” statements.
2. I will avoid making broad generalizations and grand pronouncements. I will connect what I know to my experiences and particular sources of information.
3. I will express my different viewpoints in a thoughtful manner and without an insulting spirit. I will keep in mind my goals of learning and reflection. I may respectfully disagree with others, but I will resist the urge to persuade them to “my side.”
4. I will listen with resilience, “hanging in” when I hear something that is hard to hear. I will take personal time if I find that I am no longer able to listen with a clear mind and an open heart.
5. I will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others, except to indicate that I cannot hear a speaker. I will participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitators.
6. I will “pass” or “pass for now” if I am not ready or willing to respond to a question - no explanation required.
7. All small-group conversations and listening pairs are confidential. Outside those, if asked to keep something confidential, I will honor the request. In conversations outside of the group I will not attribute particular statements to particular individuals by name or identifying information without permission.
8. During question and answer time periods, I will avoid making lengthy statements. I will not argue with speakers or other participants. Instead, I will ask questions that represent my genuine curiosity. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand... Listening, not talking is the gifted and great role... So try listening. Listen to your wife, your husband, your father, your mother, your children, your friends, to those who love you and those who don't, to those who bore you, to your enemies. It will work a small miracle. And perhaps a great one.

— *Brenda Ueland, The Art of Listening Encounter's Communication Guidelines, inspired by the 2004 Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA.*