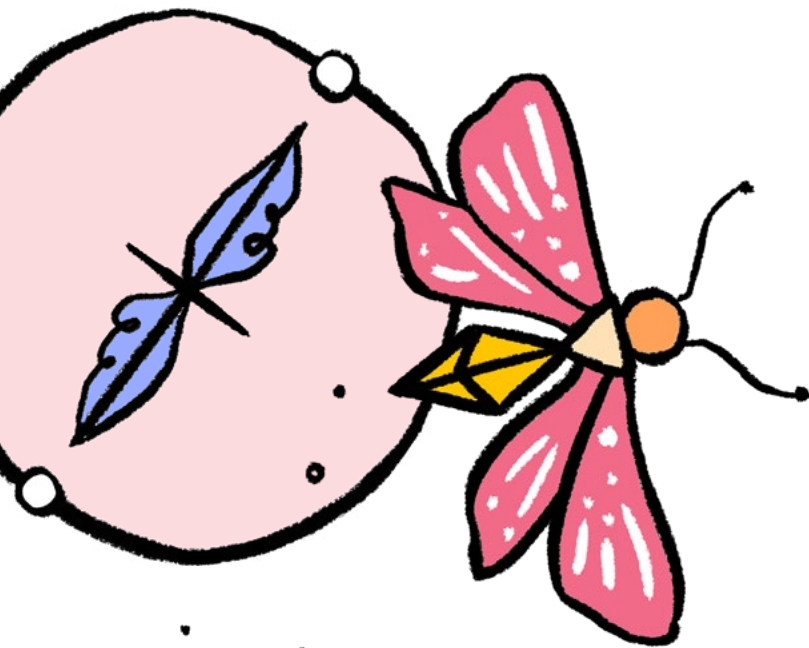


# Principles of Dialogue

UNITE RESOURCES  
BC MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES

These principles help create a safe space to collectively explore the polarizations that divide our communities. They help us learn different ways to give safe space to each other – something most of us haven't been taught to practice. Although there are no “rules” for dialogue (since it is not a game), these principles will make our interactions more helpful.



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## Practice Empathy

- Attempt to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes – to feel their feelings and to think their thoughts
- Understand that empathy is the intention to know what another person is experiencing, and not necessarily to respond to that experience in any concrete way
- Acknowledge that as human beings, we always have limited capacity to understand the entirety of another's experience

## Celebrate Diversity

- Encounter difference with openness and acceptance in order to facilitate a welcoming position to the other
- Reflect on how our assumptions might be tied to our identities and why there is discomfort when we are challenged with a new perspective
- Get to know individuals as people rather than carriers of a position

## Promote Curiosity & Learning

- Encounter difference with curiosity rather than defensiveness by asking thoughtful and open questions
- Focus on understanding a different perspective.
- Our intention is to learn from one another, not to determine who has the “best” view
- Assume that many people have pieces to the puzzle and that together we can craft long-term solutions

## Put Power in Its Place

- Engage in dialogue as peers rather than as representatives of an organization or profession
- Give space so all voices may be heard and no one voice dominates the conversation
- Understand that power is ubiquitous – we cannot simply pick it up and put it down like a tool
- Reflect on the ways unequal power relations influence our everyday social interactions

## Expose Assumptions & Suspend Judgement

- Become aware of our own assumptions and recognize how they shape our thinking, our conclusions and our way of seeing the world
- Practice patience and suspend judgement when engaging in conversation with others
- Pause our desire to prematurely jump to a solution and take time to explore the possibilities together

