**Creating a Safe & Brave Space**

**Purpose:**To establish an agreed-upon code of behavior for the group so that each participant feels safe and able to rely on others in the group

**Materials:**Newsprint and markers; a box for suggestions and comments

**Time:**20 to 30 minutes

**Planning Notes:** Review the recommended ground rules given below

**Procedure:**

1. Explain to the participants that, because they will be discussing sensitive issues, the group should agree on some ground rules. Ask them to come up with their own ground rules, ones that they will all agree to observe. List those ground rules on newsprint. Ask the participants for clarification, when needed, to be sure that everyone understands all the ideas. Suggest any of the recommended ground rules (below) that the young people didn't offer because they are important for establishing safe space.
2. Keep your list of ground rules posted prominently throughout all the activity sessions dealing with safe space. Refer to the ground rules if someone is not adhering to them and remind everyone of their agreement to follow the rules. Eventually, the participants will begin to remind one another of the rules if behavior occurs that is disrespectful or disruptive.

**Possible Ground Rules:**

* **Respect**—Give undivided attention to the person who has the floor (permission to speak).
* **Confidentiality**—What we share in this group will remain in this group.
* **Openness**—We will be as open and honest as possible without disclosing others' (family, neighbors, or friends) personal or private issues. It is okay to discuss situations, but we won't use names or other ID. For example, we won't say, "My older brother …" Instead we will say, "I know someone who …"
* **Right to pass**—It is always okay to pass (meaning "I'd rather not" or "I don't want to answer").
* **Nonjudgmental approach**—We can disagree with another person's point of view without putting that person down.
* **Taking care to claim our opinions**—We will speak our opinions using the first person and avoid using 'you'. For example, " I think that kindness is important." Not, " You are just mean."
* **Sensitivity to diversity**—We will remember that people in the group may differ in cultural background, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity or gender expression and will be careful about making insensitive or careless remarks.
* **Anonymity**—It is okay to ask any question by writing our ideas and turning them into the facilitator.
* **Acceptance**—It is okay to feel uncomfortable; adults feel uncomfortable, too, when they talk about sensitive and personal topics, such as sexuality.
* **Have a good time**—It is okay to have a good time. Creating a safe space is about coming together as a community, being mutually supportive, and enjoying each other's qualities.

\*\*\*Adapted from *Guide to Implementing TAP: A Peer Education Program to Prevent HIV and STI*(2nd edition), © 2002, Advocates for Youth, Washington, DC.\*\*\*