Community Agreements

Community agreement is a consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other in order to feel safe, supported, open, productive, and trusting as we engage in our thought work together. Agreements are an aspiration, or collective vision, for how we want to be in relationship with one another. These are explicitly developed (unlike norms that can be either explicit or implicit) and enforced by the group, not by an external authority (unlike rules that are mandated by an authority). As such, agreements must represent a consensus.

As we engage in deep and critical conversations that can be emotional, uncomfortable, and sometimes painful, emotional safety and trust is a must. By developing community agreements together, these commitments can help create a safer space, and keep us grounded and connected during our meetings.

Two Types of Community Agreements

Relational community agreements are about how we want to be in relationship with each other (e.g., speak your truth using "I" statements; stay present, listen fully, seek out multiple perspectives).

Operational community agreements identify procedures or structures we all agree to use (e.g., start & end on time; allowed number of absences, limit cell phone use.)

Co-Creating Community Agreements

- Start by asking yourself this question: What do you need from every person in this group in order to feel safe/supported/ trusting?

- Come to an agreement – top 1-3 agreements in priority order, and rewrite each one in simple phrase or sentence

- Share your top agreement and your reasons why it is important

Example
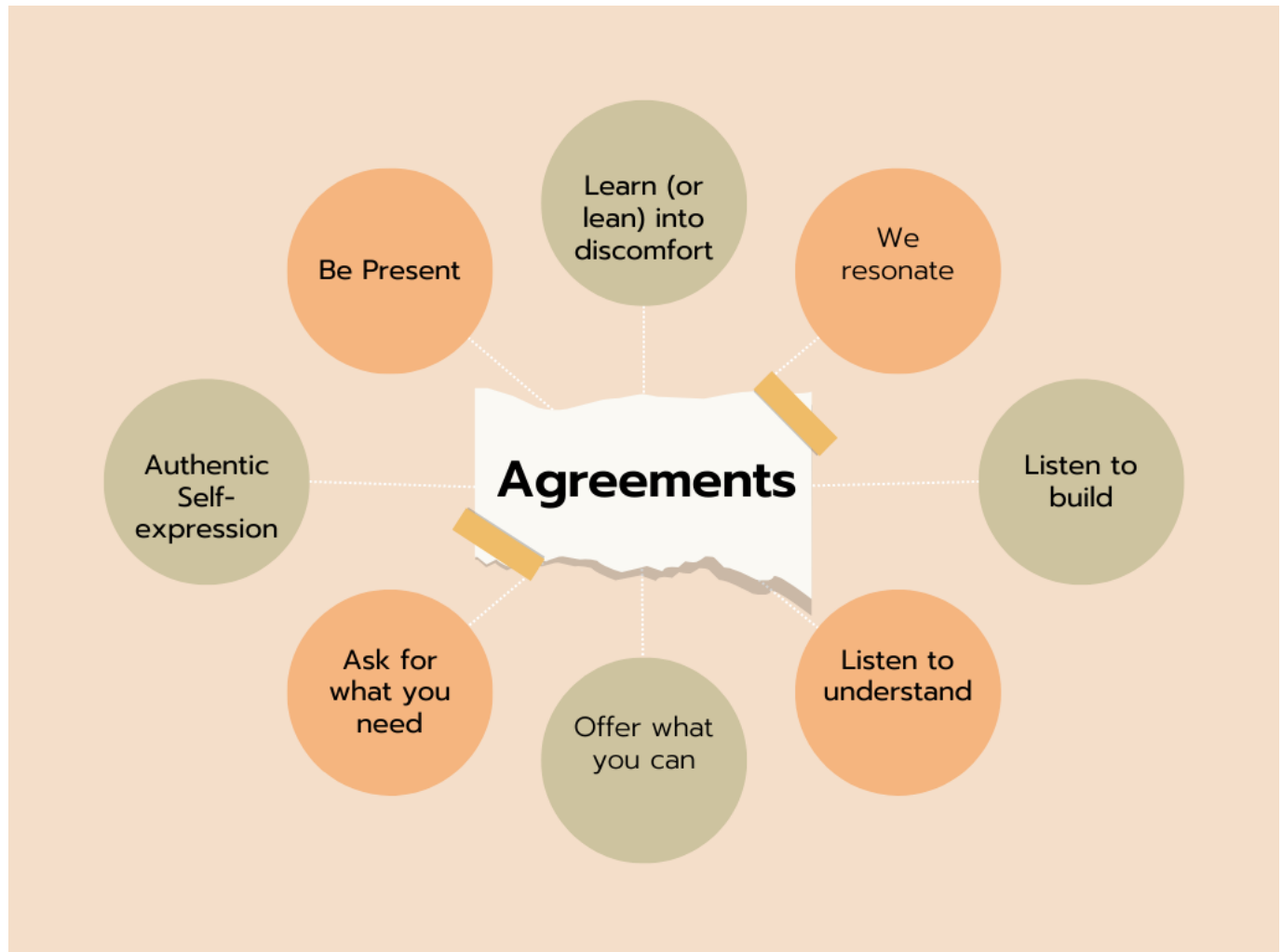
- We resonate: We do not compare, contrast, discount, or diminish our stories or those of others
- Authentic self-expression: We are our genuine selves in the conversation
- Listen to understand: We listen to understand and connect with one another
- Listen to build: We listen to build on to other's stories and amplify their voices
- Learn (or lean) into discomfort: Embrace the discomfort through our conversations
- Ask for what you need
- Offer what you can