



# Guidelines for Respectful Communication

*A welcoming theatre community with a passion for creating vibrant, engaging entertainment*

**Purpose:** To provide guidelines to all volunteers regarding expectations for respectful communication. Respectful communication can exist within the wild and colourful setting of the theatre and during the intense creative experience of mounting a play. The overriding principle that governs our involvement here is “To create high quality productions within a safe and enjoyable context of community”.

## Principles that govern respectful communication

### **We are all responsible for our verbal and non-verbal communication**

Avoid invective, sarcastic, and unauthentic statements. Tone and selective silence can also have impacts on how communications are interpreted. Written communications, such as email, can be difficult for the receiver to interpret. We must take responsibility for what is said and try to promptly clarify should it be misunderstood.

### **Everyone has five fundamental rights:**

- The right to the use of our time
- The right to the use of our property
- The right to the use of our bodies
- The right to be treated with respect
- The right to express ourselves

No one, in exercising their rights, can violate the rights of another. For example, if you need to express your frustration, you cannot do it by violating another’s right to being treated with respect.

### **Good communication occurs within positive climates. The director establishes the climate of a play. To maintain a positive communication climate:**

- Maintain open communications about small issues. If bigger issues arise, they will be handled in the same way. Use the small issues as practice.
- Accept and confirm others. Spend time to honestly hear what people are saying.
- Respect diversity in relationships and work habits. Not everyone will work the way you do, but there’s often more than one way of doing things.
- Don’t permit inappropriate behaviour to go unaddressed. But respond tactfully and at the right time.

## Manage conflict with grace and respect

- Go to the source first. Don't triangulate. Support others to deal directly with the source of conflict. Don't act as another's agent.
- Don't use print media, email, letters, or social media to manage conflict. Meet face to face.
- Listen without judgement.
- Don't negotiate with someone who is altered by drugs or alcohol. Walk away. Make a date when both are clear-headed.
- Use the 4 A's of Tongue Fu: Acknowledge, Appreciate, Apologize, Act
- Review the *Harassment Policy* of the theatre posted on the theatre website. If harassment is occurring, talk to the producer or director of the show. At any point, reach out to the ombudsperson associated with your show for further guidance.
- Consider who else is present. It may be worthwhile to wait until private for a discussion.

## Conflict Resolution Toolkit

Tool	Example
Humour	Laugh at yourself
Remember your ABCs	A: Stay in your <b>Adult</b> mode B: <b>Breathe</b> C: Remember the <b>Context</b> you are in
Provisionalism	"I might be wrong but ..."
"I'm wrong"	Readily admit your errors
"I'm sorry"	Apologize in a heartfelt manner
Negotiate	A workable compromise is a win for all
Bracketing	Put aside tangential issues "We're talking about you now, we can discuss me later"
Limit Setting	"I'm not going to let you yell at me. I'm available when you've calmed down"
Mediation	Use a neutral 3 <sup>rd</sup> party
Listening	Describe observable behaviour that bothers you and then state how you interpret that behaviour and how you feel about it.
Crap Detector	Honour your instincts. If unsafe, leave; if something doesn't feel right, exercise your right to stop and think about it.

**Above all, remember that we are a volunteer organization where people come to have fun, be creative, and learn new skills of stagecraft while we mount high quality productions.**

*Mantra of a high functioning organization: Hard on Task, Soft on People!*