

A key part of community care is creating spaces, both virtual and physical, that support this work which has been largely devalued by individualist, stigmatizing, dominant culture.

Made with love and attention by [Tiger Rahman](#).

# Creating Decolonized Space for Community Care

These suggestions can be helpful in any context where you are bringing groups together, including team meetings, community meetings, committees, and affinity groups. They are in no particular order and will often need to be iteratively reframed, reintroduced, and reimaged.

## Name what we are undoing

Healing is as much a work of undoing as a work of become. To find balance that feels sustainable, some things need to be removed while others are introduced.

Community care requires undoing assumptions that we should be able to handle our mental health and wellbeing all on our own.

## Make more time than you think you need

Unlearning something deeply held is more challenging than learning something new. Entering into healing for one person in the community will move something for someone else. There's no right pace other than what folks need, so plan large time blocks knowing you can always give time back if there's a natural ending point earlier than anticipated.



## Use your own language

Sometimes it matters less to be understood literally than to simply let yourself show up and be **received** as you are. Use what language you have within the norms of the group, and encourage speaking in images, expressions, or through art and movement to communicate. Forcing English can reinforce cultural oppression.

## Hold space for frequent integration

Pauses, breaks, spaces, silence and rest give the body and mind time to understand what's just happened.

Integration happens best without additional stimuli, whether digital or physical.

## Build trust by sharing power and encouraging agency

Start small. Let people share at their own pace. Let people move, opt out, lie down, skip, leave early, arrive when they can. Model vulnerability and invite being called in for harm you may cause as a facilitator.

## Grow and shift as the group is ready

As trust is built and the community develops, new needs will emerge and approaches can and will shift. Deep full group engagement means deep full group relationship and trust. Consider moving from smaller to larger groupings over time.





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### Have a plan, but stay guided by the group's needs

Put in the time to plan a supportive experience for the community, but be ready to set the whole thing aside if it's not what's needed on that day. Promoting the agenda over community needs tears at trust and participants' feeling valid and valued.

### Offer everyone the challenge and gift of being at the center

The gift is the strangeness of total attention, and the challenge is the strangeness of total attention.

What would be possible with the support of your whole community behind you? What needs to be true for everyone to be centered? Make time to find out.

### Co-regulate through consensual proximity and contact

Even in digital space, we can show your presence to each other through gestures, reactions, chats about what has been shared, and maintaining eye contact. In person, check to see when direct eye contact or a held hand might be supportive.

### Show your feelings and use the group to re-ground

Pick one or two people in the group you have good connections with to reground through eye contact, addressing them directly, or maybe following up outside the community space. Release expectation of being 'picked' for individual connection.

## Teacher and Influence Acknowledgements



This content is inspired by my learning and work experiences with Stacy Berry, Susanna Barkataki and the Ignite mentor team, City Year's National Equity Advisory Council and Black Leadership Response Collective, and the Empowered Spaces advisory team in St. Louis.

It draws from facilitation training in Adaptive Schools and restorative justice peace circles; my interpretation of these methods stems from study of andragogy, psychological safety, and adaptive capacity in complex social systems.

It is informed by the words and visions of adrienne maree brown, as well as her sister Autumn Brown and their podcast [How to Survive the End of the World](#).

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