

Ways of Working

- **Why have 'ways of working'?**

For a group of people holding different views, it can be important to establish 'Group Norms' or 'Ways of Working' that can act as a touchstone point during the course of a mediation or conversation which may become heated or reveal deep rifts.

- **Who establishes the 'ways of working'?**

It's helpful if the group themselves come up with, and all agree to (see below), those ways of working together which will make the gathering effective.

- **How do you prompt the group to do this?**

A simple question such as "what ways of working do we need to consider, and agree, to make sure this is an effective meeting?" can be enough. If it's a large group, asking them to share their response to this question first with their neighbour can help. If they need a bigger prompt, the facilitator might offer an initial suggestion.

- **Is it important that all in the room agree to the 'ways of working'?**

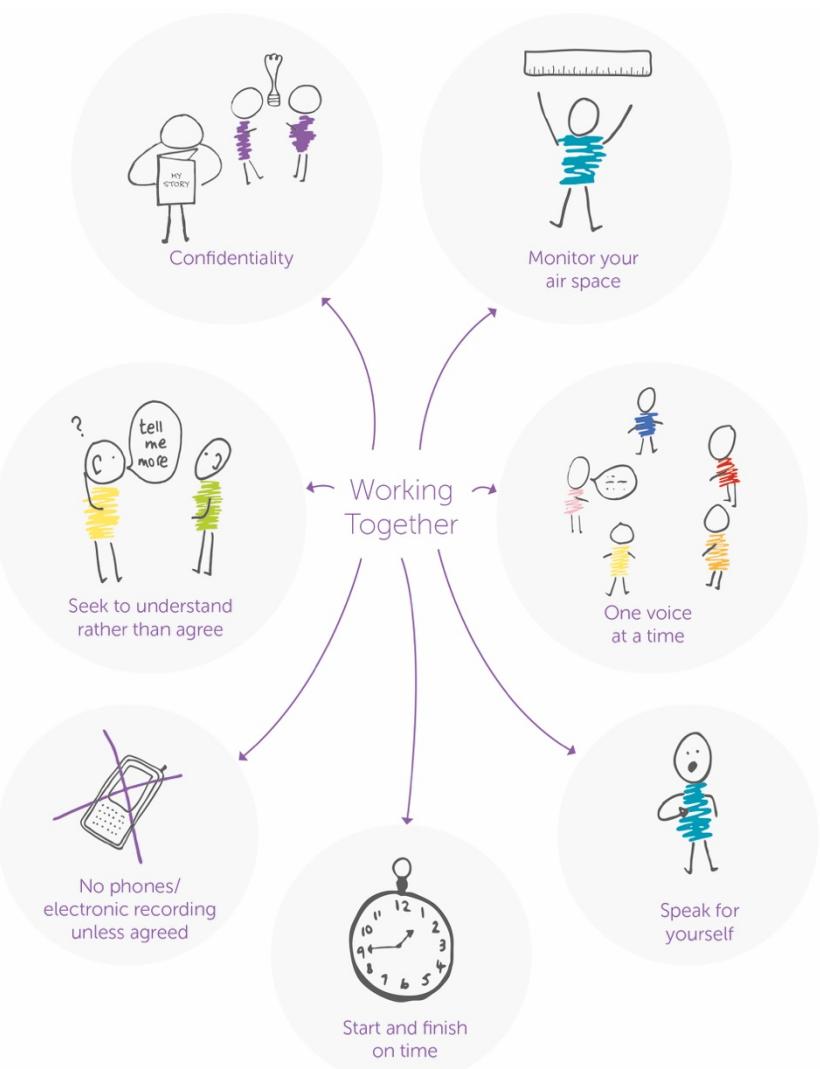
Yes, this is important – otherwise participants might feel that they can't trust one another as the conversation progresses. This may take time, which can feel frustrating to those who want to move on quickly. It can be important to take the necessary time to be sure all understand what has been agreed.

- **What examples can you give of helpful 'ways of working'?**

The panel to the right gives good examples, and of course it's important that each group comes up with their own 'ways of working.' Be aware, though, that each of these may need to be explored with the group so that all agree, for example, exactly what level of confidentiality is appropriate; what we mean by 'one voice at a time'; and why it's important that we monitor our 'air space', or notice much/how little we contribute.

- **How do we use 'ways of working' as a conversation progresses?**

Once on a flipchart, and agreed, it's important for all in the room, not just the facilitators, to make sure that these 'ways of working' are followed. They can act as a shared guide for all.



A pictorial example of 'Ways of Working', adapted from an original idea by the Kinharvie Institute.