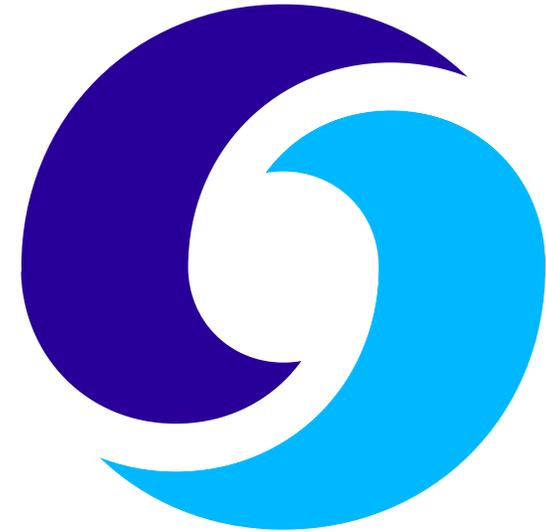


Ground Rules

Conversations at the *Stir Center* are democratic. If you don't know exactly what this means, discuss it. If after discussing it, you *still* don't know what it means, keep an open mind. And discuss it more. The very act of discussing it is what creates it. Fear not that you are creating too much.



Ground Rules

An Exercise in Democracy



Bellingham, WA
360-820-0900 · 360-820-9500
www.stirc.org

It's the Law

To a limited extent, we live in a democracy. Everyone does—some more than others. Democracy is how people live together.

Like gravity, democracy obeys a strict set of laws. Without understanding these laws, we strap on a flimsy set of wings expecting to fly. We call the resulting bruises, “Democracy.”

For starters, let's dismiss the primary tenet of democracy as we misunderstand it. Democracy is not defined by voting. It is hurt by it. In a democracy, everyone plays, not just the winners. Voting draws a line. We lose what's on the wrong side of it.

Everyone plays defines democracy. But that's not enough. Other laws must be obeyed for democracy to work. Here's a short list of laws to consider.

1. Safety
2. Responsibility
3. Freedom
4. Participation
5. Privacy
6. Friendship
7. Respect
8. Honesty

Slightly More Detail

Safety

Physical, emotional, economic. Expect not to get hit by a car, robbed, yelled at, insulted, or have no money for lunch.

Responsibility

“Be the change you want to see.”

Freedom

Choose your own thoughts and behaviors. Avoid the urge to coerce or cajole.

Participation

Be present, participate freely. Allow others to do the same.

Privacy

Know when you are alone and unobserved. Trust that a confidence will not spread.

Friendship

Make friends, not enemies. Be a good friend.

Respect

People spend their entire lives creating themselves. See their work. There's a lot to see. And a lot you won't see. People are better than you think.

Honesty

Share your truth. Try to be accurate. Ask questions. For fallible humans, questions are more truthful than answers. And more interesting. Open your mind to learning.