



GUIDELINES FOR SHARING

We have come together to try to learn about the disease of racism and promote a healing process.

Sharing is voluntary.

We want to create a safe, loving, and respectful atmosphere.

Sharing is about one's own feelings, experiences, perceptions, etc.

We are not always going to agree or see everything the same way and that's okay.

Each person has a right to and responsibility for his or her own feelings, thoughts, and beliefs.

It is important to avoid criticism or judgment about an individual's sharing, point of view, and/or feelings.

Avoid being tied up in debate and argument. It rarely changes anything or anyone and tends ultimately to inhibit the sharing.

We can only change ourselves. Our change and growth may however, inspire someone else to change.

Refrain from singling out any individual as "representing" his or her group or issue.

Feelings are important. It is important to give full attention to whoever is talking.

We will surely make mistakes in our efforts, but mistakes are occasions for learning and forgiving.

We may laugh and cry together, share pain, joy, fear, or anger.

Hopefully we will leave these sessions with a deeper understanding and a renewed hope for the future of humanity.

(Kim Polk, 1990)

LISTEN

**When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I asked.**

**When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.**

**When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.**

**Listen! All I asked, was that you listen,
not talk or do—just hear me.
Advice is cheap:**

And I can do for myself; I'm not helpless.

**When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,
you contribute to my fear and weakness.**

**But when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational, then I quit trying to convince you
and can get about the business of understanding what's
behind this irrational feeling.**

**And when that's clear, the answers are obvious.
And I don't need advice.**

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

**Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people,
because God is mute, and he doesn't give advice or try to fix things.
They just listen and let you work it out for yourself.**

**So, please listen and just hear me, and, if you want to talk,
wait a minute for your turn, and I'll listen to you.**

Anonymous