*How it works:* Once course enrollment is basically set (after add/drop), the instructor offers students the following worksheet. After students have written and paired up to share, the instructor collects ideas on the board or another shared document until agreements are formed.

**By Dr. Kara-Lynn Vaeni (Meadows School)**

[**www.smu.edu/values**](http://www.smu.edu/values)

**(Modified from the Essential Partners, Inc. exercise** [**Moments of Dissent**](https://whatisessential.org/sites/default/files/resource/file/2019-01/Moments%20of%20Dissent%20Exercise.pdf)**)**

Imagine you're in this class and the teacher asks a question. The first seven responses to the question have all generally been in agreement with each other about one way of thinking or looking at the problem. As you've listened, you've realized that your thinking/experience/beliefs/world view are different from everyone else who has spoken up until this point. You want to be able to share your opinion--your story--because you want to be understood; because it is important for people in the class to hear different ideas; because you want to get reflections or reactions to what you have to say; because you think people are missing something important. In this moment, you've got to make a decision as to whether to share that thought/story/belief/idea.

**Think about three things:**

1. **What agreements could we have among us as a class that would make you more likely to share, rather than withhold that idea?**

AGREEMENTS:

1. **What do you need to do internally to make it more possible for you to share?**

INTENTIONS:

1. **What, as the facilitator of these conversations in this class, should I be thinking about as the conditions that will help you take that step that you, your classmates, and this course need to take in order to share fully in class?**

CONDITIONS:

Take two minutes to write your responses to these questions on the worksheet. Take the full two minutes to write and write as much as you can. Afterwards, you will pair up and share what you have written.

**Keep the following parameters in mind as you create our class discussion agreements:**

1. Listen for understanding, not debate

2. Acknowledge if you may have said something that was hurtful or insensitive to someone else

3. Speak from the I

4. Take care of yourself—take breaks when you need them

5. Speak in draft

6. All truths are valid, when you talk about your lived experience

7. Speak Up if you feel a guideline is not being honored

8. If there is any other way to take it, don’t take it personally

**Sample Session Agreement from WRTR 2304, Amsel Spring 2021**

DISCUSSION AGREEMENTS:

* make the argument by building up your own evidence and providing clear examples to support
* respect others opinions - don’t immediately respond, take it in
* share something for everyone
* be sure that voices are being heard each class: thoroughly listen to someone’s comment in its entirety (don’t/try not to interrupt)
* confidentiality – what happens in the room stays in the room and does not show up on social media
* come to class learn and discuss, not just debate; listen to understand and speak to be understood

INTENTIONS (what everyone has to hold for themselves to enter into a difficult space):

* internally: regardless of your opinion it should be respected
* be accepting of each other
* do not come to class with the intention to deliberately offend or hurt
* if you disagree, talk about it politely and professionally instead of fighting about it

CONDITIONS (how the room has to be, for everyone):

* As a facilitator to moderate the general discussion - add other opinions
* try to present other positions on issues
* keep being encouraging and open-minded
* keep a poker face and don’t take one side or the other