

Working Assumptions
Developing Authentic Relationships Across Difference
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1. We have inherited divisions across many differences. Talking about them is not creating or perpetuating the divisions – it is one of the processes that we must go through to dismantle them.
2. None of us "invented" oppression; it is a legacy we inherited. Though its creation is not our fault, we must now accept responsibility for our role in its continued existence.
3. Racism, sexism, classism and every other form of oppression are simultaneously systems of oppression and systems of advantage or privilege.
4. Authentic and mutually life-giving relationships “do not spring ablaze of themselves” (Adrienne Rich). Such relationships are nurtured and sustained by a mutual commitment to truth-telling, right-relationship, humility, deep listening, accountability, justice, and love.
5. The interior journey into inner wisdom and deep joy is inextricably linked to the outer work of social change.
6. Understanding where we stand in relation to systems of privilege and oppression, and unlearning the habits, practices and policies that protect those systems, is life-long work for all of us, without exception.
7. Most of us are members of dominant or non-target groups as well as being members of non-dominant or target groups.
8. The nature of structural power and privilege is that it is often invisible to those who have it.
9. There are four realms in which systems of oppression and privilege are manifest in this society: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. For change to be genuine and lasting, it must encompass all four of these realms.
10. Systemic oppressions (sexism, classism, racism, ableism, etc.) intersect, reinforce each other, and bear similarities to each other, but these systems

are not identical. Each has its own history and implications, requiring specific strategies for change

11. We can become as passionate about dismantling the systems from which we benefit as we are about eradicating the systems that oppress us.
12. Authentic relationships of solidarity and mutuality are not possible when we try to avoid or transcend power imbalances. Authentic relationships are possible only when those imbalances are honestly acknowledged and confronted.
13. Truth-telling, confrontation, and anger can be paired with compassion, humility, and forgiveness.
14. Every community, large or small, has rich cultural traditions and proud histories of struggle. If we wish to be effective agents of change in our communities, we are beholden to learn about the work of those who have gone before us.
15. Allies are not solo acts; their social change work is always rooted in collaboration, humility, and accountability.
16. The work of dismantling systems of oppression and privilege is never done, once and for all.
17. To sustain the work of dismantling systems of oppression and privilege, we need to share experiences, insights, wisdom, energy, hope, and encouragement with each other.