

## Conversational Philosophy

Compiled by UW-Madison Astronomers Promoting Lasting Equity (UW-MAPLE)

1. [Be Aware of Intersectionality](#)
2. [Respect Identifiers](#)
3. [Brave Space, Safe Space](#)
4. [Speak to Your Own Experience](#)
5. [Yes/And](#)
6. [Assume Good Faith](#)
7. [Intent ≠ Impact](#)
8. [Oops/Ouch](#)
9. [ELMO \(Enough Let's Move On\)](#)
10. [Share your Thoughts, Share the Floor](#)
11. [Lessons Leave, Specifics Stay](#)

### **Be Aware of Intersectionality:**

The most common practice in astronomy diversity efforts is to focus on a single dimension of identity. This approach leaves behind, for example, women of color who are impacted by the intersection of racism and sexism. Instead, it is better to take a multidimensional approach and recognize that each person has a unique matrix of identities and experiences. Members of historically marginalized groups do not share an identical set of experiences, so do not assume they do.

### **Respect Identifiers:**

Respect how people want to be identified. Be mindful of someone's correct gender pronouns. If you do not yet know someone's gender pronouns, ask them a question such as "What are your gender pronouns?" or "My pronouns are [they/them], what are yours?"

### **Brave Space, Safe Space:**

Lean into your own discomfort. This is a space to engage in critical dialogue through conscious questioning and active listening. It is easier for all of us to do this in a respectful, courteous space. Please do your best to be welcoming to all of our members so we can create a comfortable space.

Not just "safe from", but "safe to".

Discussions about racism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, etc. often require us to examine issues that we do not want to talk about. However, the most progress is often made by leaning into our own discomfort so that we are able to address what needs to be addressed.

**Speak to your own experience:**

Using “I” or “we” statements often helps with avoiding generalizations and also the dynamic of explaining back to someone about their own oppressions they face. Tread cautiously when explaining or commenting on experiences distinct from your own.

**Yes/And:**

There is rarely only one way to solve a problem. When confronting complex issues, the use of “either/or” thinking often oversimplifies situations and makes it more difficult to resolve conflicts when there are multiple viable routes forward. In contrast, “both/and” thinking allows us to recognize that truths are multifaceted and to come up with more options, which are frequently better than any one person’s idea.

**Assume Good Faith:**

Not everyone comes in with the same set of experiences and knowledge. Acknowledge this and assume that people have good intent. Of course, please have positive intent yourself and be responsible for the impact of your actions and words, as well. Not everyone is out to get you. If someone doesn’t understand a term, do not yell at them for not knowing, instead explain calmly and clearly as you can if appropriate.

**Intent ≠ Impact:**

Inclusive Astronomy members enter into this space with good intentions. However, sometimes we end up saying or doing something that is hurtful even when we have good intentions. Good intentions do not excuse hurtful behavior, so we will think about how our words will be received before we open our mouth.

**Oops/Ouch:**

Folks will mess up while having these conversations; it is inevitable. When someone says something hurtful or problematic, members can say “ouch” which serves as a marker that there is something that needs to be addressed and discussed further. Members who say something that is harmful or problematic and then realize it should say “oops” to acknowledge it and then try again. Ask the person who said ouch if they’re comfortable talking about it (there, elsewhere, or otherwise)

**ELMO (Enough Let’s Move On):**

It’s just a call to remind the room that the group has gone off on a tangent– to bring everyone back to topic at hand.

**Share your Thoughts, Share the Floor:**

If you find yourself talking a lot, share the space, and if you're not talking much, share your thoughts. It's important that everyone is allowed equal time to express their thoughts and feelings during the discussion portion of our meeting, so do your best to not talk over people and offer insight without stepping on any toes. Finger (index, etc.) for question, fist for comment.

**Lessons Leave, Specifics Stay:**

What's said here- stays here, what's learned here- leaves here. This ensures confidentiality, as well as sharing what you've learned; Share the lessons learned, but not the names of people. Not everyone is out, and some stories were meant to stay in the room in which they were spoken. Try to respect the privacy of other people by using generalities, but don't be afraid to say "this doesn't leave the room/department".