

## **How You Can Help Make Rachel's Network a Welcoming Community**

Rachel's Network is united in its mission to promote women as impassioned leaders and agents of change. We strive to cultivate bonds that enable us to grow with and learn from one another, and we celebrate our unique differences.

We are committed to safe and inclusive gatherings for all attendees regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or background, religion, national origin, age, disability (physical or mental), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, parental or marital status, political affiliation, neuro(a)typicality, or physical appearance.

We can build a stronger community when we approach our interactions with empathy and kindness. **Join us in making our community a welcoming one by following the tips below:**

### **Embrace different perspectives**

Rachel's Network celebrates the power of women joining forces while recognizing that not all women share the same beliefs and perspectives. The experiences of white, straight, able-bodied women with resources are not necessarily the same as those of women of color, queer women, women with disabilities, or women with few financial resources.

Our meetings often provide guests an opportunity to hear from women who have been harmed by systemic oppression of varied kinds. Come to these conversations willing to learn something new.

### **Be present**

During our gatherings, please turn your mobile phone on vibrate and disconnect from devices as much as you can, especially when speakers are presenting. Refrain from conversation during musical performances or other artistic presentations to respect our guests.

### **Ask yourself: why am I talking? (W.A.I.T.)**

We want everyone to feel comfortable contributing and sharing ideas. If you notice you have spoken several times during a discussion, please give others a chance to talk.

Ask yourself if your comments are relevant to the discussion or if your views have already been expressed by others. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Be mindful of conformity bias, which occurs when people feel pressured to agree with everyone else in the room.

### **Acknowledge mistakes and hold ourselves accountable**

Even with the best intentions, everyone makes mistakes. Remember that if someone offers you feedback on something problematic that you said, it likely took a great deal of courage for them to do so. The best way to respect that courage is to pause and

listen, acknowledge your mistake, apologize, and move on—with a renewed commitment to do better.

We encourage attendees to use the [oops/ouch method](#) to address unintentionally harmful, offensive, or derogatory comments:

If you say something that is hurtful or problematic and you realize it, you can say **"oops"** to acknowledge it and then try again. Just as you might say "oops" if you accidentally stepped on someone's foot, "oops" can be used for verbal harms too.

If you see someone else say something harmful or problematic, then you can say **"ouch"**, which lets the speaker and those present know that something needs to be discussed further.

If you aren't sure why something you said may have been hurtful, or you witness comments or behaviors that make you or others uncomfortable, you can ask President Fern Shepard, Board Chair Kef Kasdin, or another member you trust for assistance or resources.

**We hope that these suggestions\* help make Rachel's Network a warm, welcoming, and brave space for all women.** Please share any additional suggestions with us at [programs@rachelsnetwork.org](mailto:programs@rachelsnetwork.org).

### Untitled

by Beth Strano

There is no such thing as a "safe space" —  
We exist in the real world.  
We all carry scars and have caused wounds.  
This space  
seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,  
and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere,  
This space will not be perfect.  
It will not always be what we wish it to be  
But  
It will be our space together,  
and we will work on it side by side.

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\*These suggestions were adapted from:

[HarvardWIT+ Community agreements guide](#)

[Bridging & Breaking: Expanding Belonging](#)

[American Meteorological Society Safe and Inclusive Meetings](#)

[Buffer's Code of Conduct](#)

[SRCCON Code of Conduct](#)

[Recurse Code of Conduct](#)

[University Corporation for Atmospheric Research – Facilitating Productive Conversations](#)