

## Communication Guidelines

### Honoring Language & Connection at The Front Yard Tree

By becoming a member of The Front Yard Tree you agree to keep to the spirit of the following guidelines and recommendations. We agree to offer feedback about communication, when deemed necessary, in respectful and creative ways.

Nonetheless, The Front Yard Tree reserves the right to cancel membership at any time for any reason we deem necessary to maintain the integrity of the community.

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### Ways to Think about Sharing

We want to support clear and thoughtful interaction across all parts of The Front Yard Tree—Zoom classes, the social feed, private messages, and more.

Language, like the imagination, is incredibly powerful in shaping our lives and empowering us in the world. The Front Yard Tree is devoted to honoring the possibilities of speech through slow and curious learning. 'Good' speech is for everyone, no matter what walk of life. But it does take intentional effort and reflection to grow.

This, too, is a practice—and it's okay to take your time with it.

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Here a few ideas to get us started. See what resonates.

#### **1. Explore Speaking with intention.**

Instead of only focusing on what *not* to say, we invite you to explore what kind of

language you *want* to use. This is a general question we can be asking ourselves, not just in TFYT.

## **2. Explore Speaking from empowerment.**

What is language that honors your dignity and personal power? And perhaps more importantly—are there ways we speak, often unconsciously, that diminish or demean ourselves?

## **3. Explore self-accountability.**

This is a space for people who want to step into their potential. When we speak, let's remember that judgment—of ourselves or others—can close us off. Communication becomes more freeing when we take responsibility for our part.

## **4. Real connection takes time.**

True connection asks for patience, openness, and a willingness to learn. At The Front Yard Tree, we honor slow, humble growth in our relationships—both with people and the world beyond. Here are a few ways to practice going slow:

- You don't need to use your real name right away. Share only what you're comfortable with, at your own pace.
- Challenge yourself gently—try small interactions and see how they feel.
- When discomfort arises around sharing, try noticing it rather than getting caught in what to say (or whether to say anything at all). Use your practice to stay with the feeling, and trust the conversation unfolding within you first.
- Listen to your own voice—literally. Pay attention to the sound of your words. When you're alone or journaling, play with different word choices, rhythms, and phrases.

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## Social Issues

In support of this intentionality with language, we ask everyone to be especially mindful when speaking about the larger world—politics, ecological crises, injustices, and other complex social issues. These conversations matter deeply, but they are often entered into from habitual states of constriction, fear, or urgency. These states

can limit our ability to truly connect, to listen, and to respond with care. Most importantly, they can also restrict our capacity to respond to life with the kind of creativity that is bigger than our problems, both personal and collective. This keeps us stuck.

Before bringing these topics into shared space, we invite you to check in with yourself:

- Am I speaking from a grounded place, or from reactivity?
- Is there space in me to listen as much as I speak?
- Am I sharing to deepen connection and understanding, or to relieve my own tension?

We don't ask you to avoid difficult topics—we ask you to hold them with reverence and self-awareness. When we speak from presence rather than pressure, our words have the power to soften hard edges and empower others,

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## Bringing Balance

In our larger lives, we may need many different kinds of conversations—some of which may not reflect the values we emphasize here. That's part of being human. We all have a diversity of needs at any given time, and we're not looking for anyone to perform or force a fake version of connection or affected speech. But there is something to say about trying in the first place.

The values and ideas shared in our communication guidelines are offered as a balancing counterpoint to the kinds of speech we so often encounter—language that can feel disconnected, reactive, or devoid of real care.

We're inviting a different rhythm here. One that takes into account the deeper possibilities of how we speak and listen, and how we shape the world together through our words.

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## A Few More Ideas!

Again, see what resonates for you.

- Speak from your own experience.
  - Avoid labeling or judging others' experiences, appearance, or qualities—whether positively or negatively.
  - Try speaking *for* your feelings and parts (“a part of me feels...”) rather than *from* them.
  - If you're triggered, take a pause. Wait until you're grounded to re-engage.
  - Share stories.
  - Be creative.
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