Bring Feminist Practices into Your Online Meetings

Now that we're all moving to online meetings, we have the opportunity to rethink how we want these meetings to unfold. Rather than simply transferring common but ineffective interaction patterns into the online space, take this chance to experiment with **feminist meeting practices.**

These suggestions from our experiments at Feminists At Work and the Feminist Enterprise Commons can help your group expand how you put #FeministBusiness values of **Equality, Agency, Interindependence, Generativity,** and **Whole Humanness** into your online experiences together, so that *everyone flourishes***.**

Your #1 feminist practice is to e**stablish working agreements** for the group & session using a democratic, participatory process. Agreements should include your vision for working together, how you will manage participation challenges, and more.

Rotate the roles of host, conversation leader, and facilitator from meeting to meeting. **Share** opportunities for notetaking, conversation summarizing, reporting out, etc. among participants.

Craft a **land acknowledgement** that reflects where folks are coming in 'from' and / or what you are creating in the virtual space together.

Host a **check-in** where every participant gets to speak and share their name. Let every voice be heard once at the start, to set a practice of inviting all in the gathering to participate.

Create a **group gesture**— a hand motion, a facial expression, a shout— that members can use together to open and close meetings. This can be surprisingly **fun** since it creates not only **levity** but also a physical sense of **community** across the interweb.

Put together a **public** Google document that has the agenda, any pre-reading or information, slides, diagrams, reference lists, bio & contact information about participants, previous group agreements, and any other information that might be helpful. **Invite** everyone to **contribute** to it. The document can be accessed before and during a meeting to support group conversations.

Before moving to a break, offer a one-minute **meditation** and ask people to **reflect** on what they most need to do on the break in order to **care** for themselves.

Build in **time for interaction and process**, not just for "getting things done". The collective as a whole and each individual in it needs to be cared for. This care takes time.

Invite everyone to **share** the same visual image in their view — a banner, a piece of art, a plant, a word. Because virtual backgrounds are available only to those with late model tech, having some participants use these may leave others out.

For a discussion of of why these tips are feminist practice, please visit my post at http:// CVHarquail.com/blog/

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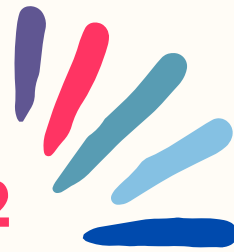
Decide as a group whether or not to record the meeting. Often, we default to 'no recording' if only one person doesn't want it, but this shouldn't be automatic. Other participants might find a recording to be really helpful. Work this out **together**.

Choose the **simplest tech** for the task at hand. Remember that the simplest tech is often the easiest for everyone to use. Simpler tech reduces the demand for all kinds of resources, and **equalizes access** for those who have less.

Care for **bodies** and **hearts** as well as minds. Put movement breaks, reflection, and emotional sharing on the agenda. Give these real group time.

Open up **other channels of communication** to run in parallel with the conversation, to expand the possibilities for many kinds of contributions and for many different voices to join in.

Design a **closing ritual** to pair with an opening acknowledgement. Consider something related to **creating a shared future.**

Add a **gift** to the closing page of zoom or to a followup email -- not just a link to the meeting's notes but also a little downloadable **treat** (an image, a handout, link to a song).

Shortly before ending your meeting, invite the group to consider how well your experience together **aligned** with the group agreements you'd set with yourself earlier.

Create a set of gestures that **communicate** responses that are important to the group. In addition to the "feminist fistbump",we also have a way of placing our hands on our hearts to indicate depth of **feeling**, we pump up the volume when we agree and we also snap like beatniks while someone's talking to indicate our **support**. Each of these gestures adds to the feeling that we're **together** in this.

Play **music** as folks join and leave the meeting. Several minutes before the end of a break, start playing some upbeat music to help folks track when it's time to come back and to welcome them as they regroup. We've even had a musical guest to play us a song at closing!

Help keep the whole community in mind. Take a screenshot of the **whole community** — a gallery view of everyone participating, with their approval. This can be shared on social media, printed out to hang next to your computer, or sent in a followup email to participants.

Be as fully present as possible and add some **spice** to your **presence**. Use props, nicknames, pronouns, accessories, activities — whatever invites you to add a little more "you" to the gathering. Drink some tea **together**. Wear hats, bows, scarves, happy clothes, fun earrings. Use emoji and gifs in the group chat. Have your pets drop in for a quick woof.

Add your ideas too!
Send suggestions to **cv@FeministsAtWork.com.**
Join us in the **Feminist Enterprise Commons**
https://feministenterprisecommons.mn.co/feed