

Sharing Online and Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential to creating a safe environment in which we all feel free to share our deepest feelings and dreams. It is crucial that we each feel confident that the words we write or the things we express in small groups online won't be repeated or reported elsewhere.

Even if you carefully disguise someone's identity, don't use their real name, or change the details of their story, there is a chance that someone else (even in a distant city) may recognize the person you're talking about. Even though we come from different places, people are connected with each other in ways that are not always readily apparent.

After our sessions, feel free to talk about anything you said, wrote, shared or learned, but please refrain from talking about anybody else unless you have that person's direct permission. When in doubt, remember: What is shared in class remains in class

A second aspect of confidentiality involves the way we speak to each other outside of our group sessions—over chat, in an email or if we meet each other somewhere else or in the days and weeks to come. Participants choose what they want to share at a particular moment in time; that doesn't mean they want to discuss it later. If you're engaged with another group member and they don't choose to bring up a topic they wrote about or discussed in group, don't raise it yourself. It's essential that people control how, when, (or if) they discuss what they choose to share.

In an online environment, confidentiality requires one additional consideration. Since many of us are sequestered at home with our family members, it can be difficult to find privacy. However, we don't want other people, not participating in our class, to be able to hear what others are sharing. We ask you not to sign on in a public portal, and if possible, that you participate in a private place with a door that you can close,

so that your words and the words of other group members cannot not be overheard by others in your household.

Headphones are helpful for situations where you cannot create privacy in other ways.