

## Creating Safer Spaces at Sexy Spring

Safer Space is an essential part of every Sexy Spring event. We believe that Safer Spaces are inviting, engaging, and supportive environments in which all people feel comfortable behaving genuinely. Yet Sexy Spring participants have different communication styles, personalities and opinions, and come from diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. In order to foster this kind of temporary community space, people must respect other and actively look out for the well being of all those attending this skill share. Supporting the most vulnerable members of our community is one of our goals. This is why we define safer space as survivor-centric space (which is a space that prioritizes survivors' needs).

We choose to say "Safer" Space rather than "safe space" because we acknowledge that no space is entirely "safe" for everyone. Some events may push people's boundaries more than other events. It is important that Sexy Staffers listen carefully to participants' experiences and act on what they hear.

It is our hope that the guidelines below can enable us to support each other in exploring our own experiences and boundaries. Sexy Spring strives to allow participants to learn new things at their own pace. We provide a Quiet Room for staffers and participants to use when they need some quiet time to process or rest.

Practicing **active consent** is essential to Safer Space. For the duration of Sexy Spring, **consent is defined as a clearly asked question followed by a clearly stated yes.**

### Guidelines for Creating Safer Space at Sexy Spring

#### 1. Respect your own physical, mental and emotional boundaries.

- Stay attuned to your own needs
- Feel free leave workshops at any time, for any reason
- If something doesn't feel right to you, please speak up. You may not be the only one who feels that way.
- If you don't want to talk or answer a question, say so
- Don't wait for someone to "get the hint." Try to vocalize what you need.
- Be assertive if possible. Speak to the person you have a concern with and be direct
- If you need help negotiating a situation, find a Vibes Watcher to assist you.

#### 2. Respect others' physical, mental and emotional boundaries.

- **Always ask for explicit verbal consent before engaging or touching someone.** Never assume consent, especially if drug/alcohol use is involved. Highly intoxicated people are always considered non-consenting.
- **Don't assume** the race, sexuality, gender, history with violence etc. of others. Instead, ask if someone is open to engaging in dialogue about identity. Don't take it personally if someone doesn't want to answer a question. Try asking a Vibes Watcher instead.

**\*Special note on gender assumptions\*** Sexy Spring is a place where everyone should feel empowered to choose their own gender. If at all possible, find out what pronouns people prefer or use neutral pronouns such as ‘they’ or ‘z’. It is also important to separate terms for peoples’ genitals from their gender. We’re born with our genitals but we get to choose our genders. Genitals can be referred to on an “internal/external” continuum as opposed to a “male/female” one.

- **Respect the confidentiality of others.** You are welcome to share what you learned at Sexy Spring, but not names or identifying details of other conference participants

### 3. Sexy Spring is a cooperative learning environment

- We are all here to learn, and we all have something to offer
- Clarifying questions are encouraged
- Respect diverse opinions, beliefs, and points of view. Share ideas rather than judgments. Use ‘I’ statements as much as possible to state your reactions or your experiences.
- There is no such thing as totally Safe Space. In attending Sexy Spring you are taking a risk in order to learn. You may find yourself outside your comfort zone.
- Assume positive intent
- Everyone (including you) will make unintentional mistakes
- Be aware of the effects your behavior has on others and accept responsibility for it.
- Expect to be confronted by others if you make a mistake

### **Guidelines for Vibes Watchers and Sexy Staffers**

It’s preferable for Sexy Staffers to work in pairs representing more than one gender.

1. **Before the workshop begins**, be sure you have backup and remember to practice healthy self-care. Check in with your fellow Staffer. Check in with the presenter, review the content of the presentation and discuss how active the presenter wants to be in maintaining Safer Space.
2. Familiarize yourself with the space. Keep vigilant about potential blind or trouble spots.
3. **When the workshop begins**, clearly identify yourself as a Safer Space provider and make it known that you are there to give help and support. Also, be sure that the Guidelines to Creating Safer Space are read and/or understood by all participants, especially the presenter, and that **everyone agrees to them**.
4. As well as responding to direct requests for support from participants, check in with the group or individuals when you think there is a need. You cannot always sense the “vibe”. Feel free to ask.
5. When in a Safer Space provider role drink responsibly, if at all.

### **Guidelines for Interventions**

#### **Individuals**

1. Check in with the person who feels unsafe. Sometimes you will need to pursue a participant who leaves a workshop to find out if they need help. Focus on the needs of the person requesting help. Ask them what would make them feel more safe or comfortable, and get consent from them before any intervention begins.
2. Often the best solution is the simplest one. Sometimes a short talk, a drink of water, a few deep breaths, some caring attention or a few minutes in the quiet room will work wonders.
3. Get Help! You cannot care for someone, decide on next steps and watch a workshop all by yourself. Get Sexy Spring Organizers and other Sexy Staffers' input before taking further actions.

### **Groups**

1. Assess your comfort and the vibe of the group as a whole. Try to keep the Guidelines in mind. Do not wait for things to get really uncomfortable. If necessary, stop the workshop to address your concerns. Safety and respect are much more important than the content of any workshop.
2. If possible, restore good vibe by reminding the whole group of specific guidelines. When necessary, remind individuals, as unobtrusively as possible, of specific Guidelines.
3. Repeated problems should not be addressed with repeated reminders. Stop the workshop to address the group as a whole, confer with fellow Staffers and/or ask to speak with an individual away from the group.
  - Try to remain impartial/non-judgmental of all parties involved during an intervention.
  - Stay calm. Try to deescalate, rather than escalate a situation.
  - Do not act alone. Get Help! Consult with Sexy Spring organizers and other Sexy Staffers and try to reach consensus before deciding on a course of action.

**Feedback** Creating Safer Space requires active community feedback. Gathering feedback and putting it into action allows us to continue to improve as Safer Space providers. Please feel free to talk with Sexy Spring organizers about anything concerning Safer Space. Thank you.