

Safe(r) Space Policy

“Safer Space” is an essential part of every anti-oppression-centric action camp. Safe(r) spaces are a visible presence of allies that can help to shape a culture that is accepting of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity/ expression, or any other difference.

We choose to say “Safer” Space rather than “safe space” because we acknowledge that no space is entirely “safe” for everyone.

We believe that Safe(r) Spaces are inviting, engaging, and supportive environments in which all people feel comfortable behaving genuinely. It is important that ASPECC organizers, volunteers, and participants listen carefully to raised experiences and act on what they hear.

Participants have different communication styles, personalities and opinions, and come from diverse gender, racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. In order to foster this kind of temporary community space, people must respect others and actively look out for the well being of all those attending workshops, events and/or social spaces with ASPECC. Supporting the most vulnerable members of our community is one of our goals. This is why we define safe(r) space as a space that is encouraging for people who have been made uncomfortable at other events due to racism, sexism, physical and sexual assault, etc.

ASPECC strives to allow participants to learn new things at their own pace. We also provide a Quiet SPACE for volunteers and participants to use when they need some quiet time to process or rest. Some of our events are exclusive, permitting only certain groups to attend. This is to ensure that there are spaces that are safer for those from heavily marginalized groups.

Consent

Consent is essential to Safe(r) Space. Consent is two (or more) people deciding together to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way with each other- whether the activity is physical, verbal, or sexual. Consent is the presence of a “yes”, not the absence of a “no.” For our purposes, consent is defined as a clearly asked question followed by a clearly stated “yes.”

Tips for Creating Safe(r) Space at the ASPECC Community Centre

1. Respect your own physical, mental and emotional boundaries. – Stay attuned to your own needs

– Feel free to 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 an ASPECC Peer Volunteer 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 Peer Volunteer instead.

– This centre 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 'zie'. It is also important to separate terms for people's' genitals from their gender. We're born with our genitals but we get to choose our genders. If you happen to screw up, correct yourself.

– Respect the confidentiality of others. You are welcome to share what you learned at the ASPECC Centre, but not names or identifying details of other convergence participants

3. Alberta Sex Positive Education & Community Centre 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 the ASPECC Centre 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, make efforts to step back,
listen and learn from those with different experiences from your own

Creating Safe(r) Space requires active community feedback. Gathering feedback and
putting it into action allows us to continue to improve as Safe(r) Space providers. Please
feel free to talk with ASPECC organizers about anything concerning Safe(r) Space.
Thank you.