## [Tool F4]Self-reflection and practice for allies, Practice Questions

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Being an ally supporting the process of taking accountability can be challenging. These are self-reflection tools that might help allies.

Self-reflection 1: How can I deal with my discomfort with conflict?

Sometimes we don’t want to get involved. We know that harm is being done, but out of discomfort, lack of confidence or wanting to avoid conflict, we say things to ourselves like:

* Who am I to judge?
* We haven’t heard the other side
* It’s not that big a deal
* I don’t know all the details, so I can’t say anything
* They’ll work it out in their own time
* They won’t be able to handle the confrontation, I don’t think they’re ready, I think they need a lot of support before they’ll be ready
* I already talked with the person doing harm, I don’t see how bringing it up again will make a difference
* Maybe this isn’t a good time
* It was a bad day, it’s not a pattern, it’s not my place to say anything
* I’m too busy and tired to deal with this, people need to sort their own lives out.

If you notice these thoughts, ask yourself:

* Am I thinking these thoughts to avoid conflict?

If so, think about your way of dealing with conflict and see if you can make a change. Can you ask others for help so it isn’t just you?

* Am I stressed out and need to step back and take a rest?

If so, take a moment to reflect, take a break, or find support to care for yourself. If you think you need more than a short break, let the group know.

* Do I still have questions about what happened that are holding me back?

If so, let the group know and talk to others in the group to see if you can get the answers. Others might have questions too, or you might have to get used to not knowing the whole story.

* Am I feeling so unsure that I cannot play my role in a good way?

If so, let the group know and figure out a better role.

* Am I thinking this way because someone treated me like this too, and no-one did anything to help?

If so, you might want to take some time to think about what you’re feeling, and whether you want to do something about it.

Self-reflection 2: How can I separate care from making excuses?

Anger, disgust, sadness and fear are normal reactions to violence and can motivate us to get involved. But support for accountability requires care, understanding and willingness to connect with the person doing harm.

There is a fine line between care and understanding on one side, and making excuses for violence on the other. Supporting the person doing harm might mean listening to their pain, fear and maybe even their blame of others, and trying to see their side of the story, while at the same time being clear that what they did wasn’t okay.

It can be hard to see challenges to violence as caring. These questions can help:

* What positive connection do we have?
* How is my support in the process of taking accountability a gift to the person doing harm, even if it is hard?
* How is this work a gift to me, even if it is hard?
* What is healthy and strong about the person doing harm?
* What values show they can change?

Practice: What do I say to the person doing harm?

You can practise saying things to someone else so you’ll remember what to say when you’re with person causing harm.

Face another team member. While looking at each other, have one person read each phrase from the list, and the other repeat it. Use a normal speaking voice. You’re not angry, bored or threatened. Come up with your own phrases to help.

* I care about you
* I’m not rejecting you
* I want you to have good relationships in your life
* I want to understand how you’re feeling
* I want to support you to change your behaviour
* I want to support you to try new things that might work better
* I want to understand what this is like for you
* How are you doing?
* I think you’re blaming the process right now so that you don’t have to talk about what’s hard. Is it possible that’s true?
* I don’t think this kind of behaviour is ever acceptable. How could you express what is important to you in a non-violent way? (or non-controlling, non-abusive, etc)
* I know it can be hard to say what’s really going on for you
* Please lower your voice
* Do you need to take a break?
* I’m sorry this is so hard
* I’m sure things can get better even though they’re hard now
* Let’s slow down
* What might that be like for the other person?
* Why do you want to make a different choice next time?
* What are you scared of losing?
* I hear you focusing on the other person and their faults again
* What are you responsible for in this situation?
* How do you want me to share what I think with you?
* I need a break
* What is one thing you can do this week that feels like a move in a good direction?
* Let’s hang out again, let’s talk again.

If there are conversations you’re worried about, like how to bring up what you know about what they’re doing, talk to others in your group about it. Brainstorm easy, helpful things you can say. Make sure that you understand what is wrong with their behaviour, especially if it isn’t physically violent.

Remember that you might not be able to convince them that they’re doing anything wrong, but you can be clear that you see what’s happening, and it isn’t okay with you.