

Building safety is different from building comfort. If the facilitator and the group do a good job of building safety, then the participants will frequently go out of their comfort zone in order to stretch and grow. Allowing feelings of discomfort can, therefore, be one sign of growing safety in a group.

- Allow the group to experience common ground
- Use small groups frequently
- Use a buddy system, or small on-going support groups
- Ask participants to do goal-setting and goal-sharing; check in on goals periodically
- Give permission for a range of self-disclosure – it's OK for each person to set own level
- As facilitator, give warm attention
- Show the group that you value safety
- Give support for forgiveness, including self-forgiveness (it encourages risk-taking!)
- Do “noticings”: non-judgmental, non-evaluative observations
- Invite the group to take care of the whole group (although not to be “care-takers,” engaged in rescues and fix-its)
- Model OK-ness (for example, rather than exhibiting anxiety because a participant is angry, crying, or in crisis)
- Remember the option of going one-on-one with anxious participants, for example during break or coaching his/her buddy to reach out to anxious one
- Design activities for an alternating rhythm of differentiation and integration. Differentiation may mean the experience of individuality *or* the experience of a subgroup (“We people of colour” ... “We men” ... “We young adults” ... “We senior staff” ... “We new board members”)
- Use structure (like precise formulations of sentence completions) and rigor (like precise amounts of time for break, facilitator does what she/he says they will do)
- Invite participants to take care of themselves
- Acknowledge the margins as well as the mainstream of the group

Source: Training for Change, <http://www.TrainingForChange.org>