



### 1.3 GROUP AGREEMENT



<b>Time required</b>	20 minutes
<b>Grade level</b>	6 - 7 - 8
<b>Aim</b>	To negotiate agreed rules for the class to ensure that all students feel safe to share and learn together and that their views will be respected.
<b>Procedure</b>	<p>There are many resources available for developing group or class agreements. See Teacher Resources for Circle Time, which also includes notes on Energisers, Ice-breakers and Mixers.</p> <p>The most important aspect of creating a group agreement is that the students feel that they have ownership of the rules – that they have created them rather than being told, “These are the rules”.</p> <p>This is particularly important in the Let's Get Together program as some of the topics and issues discussed can be sensitive and personal.</p> <p>An example of a negotiated agreement is included in the Student Examples as a point of reference for students, not to be copied or accepted by the group without discussion.</p> <p>While the class agreement should be displayed prominently and referred to often, it is suggested that it not be laminated, so that it can remain a “living” document to be reviewed and updated as the need arises.</p>
<b>Teacher notes</b>	<p><b>Creating a safe &amp; supportive classrooms</b></p> <p>A positive classroom means a secure environment in which students have the skills and opportunities to participate and contribute, and have a sense that their contributions are acknowledged and valued.</p> <p>This is even more important in a program such as <i>Let's Get Together</i>, where topics may bring up emotions, concerns or vulnerabilities for students.</p> <p>In a safe and supportive environment, students are more likely to feel that they:</p>



- can express a point of view;
- are valued members of the group;
- will benefit from working as a team;
- are comfortable moving out of their established friendship groups to work with other class members;
- are able to ask and answer questions about each other's work;
- understand the teacher's expectations about behaviour within the classroom;
- can respect the confidences of others; and
- understand the agreed rules for conducting classroom conversations and other activities.

In this program, we recommend that teachers discourage students from making public revelations of a deeply personal nature. A suggestion is that students maintain a journal for the program in which they can undertake written work and write reflections. Encourage the use of a variety of recording methods in journals, such as cartoons, drawings, poems, doodles and stories.

Students can use their journal to record feelings or incidents, so it is important that the journal be kept secure between sessions and treated as a confidential document between the student and teacher. Teachers will need to monitor these journals between sessions for indications that a student might require further support.

The following gives examples of things that might be included in a group agreement:

To ensure that everyone feels safe to participate in our classroom we all agree to:

- Only have one person speak at a time. Put up our hands to speak and wait our turn.
- Listen to each other's opinions even if we don't agree with them.
- Discuss ideas, not people.
- Not repeat personal things said in our classroom (confidentiality/privacy).
- Be conscious of time - help stick to it or negotiate for more.
- Name up stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination.
- Participate!