

# A MANIFESTO FOR CREATING BRAVE SPACES



Brave spaces is a concept that has emerged as a necessary addition to safe spaces particularly in performance and artistic environments. Essentially a **"Brave Spaces"** emphasises at creating an environment free from harm and judgement, while recognizing that **growth and meaningful dialogue** often require navigating uncomfortable and challenging situations. In such spaces individuals are inspired and encouraged to **engage with difficult topics, confront their own biases, and push the boundaries of their understanding** in a **supportive and respectful manner, towards all races, sexes, genders, abilities, immigration status, and lived experiences.**

In the context of performance spaces, safe & brave spaces allow artists to explore complex themes and intense emotions without the pressure to remain within the confines of comfort. This approach fosters a more **dynamic and honest artistic expression**, where performers can take creative risks and delve into nuanced narratives, ensuring that while discomfort may arise, it is navigated thoughtfully and constructively. At the same time, we create a vocabulary to distinguish discomfort from harm. By learning to navigate discomfort in a secure and supportive environment, participants build resilience and respect for diverse perspectives.

## KEY PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

1. **Mutual Respect:** All collaborators and artists should respect each other's perspectives, experiences, and boundaries. This fosters a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and heard. **Consent is non-negotiable.** Establish clear consent protocols for all physical interactions, fostering open communication and respecting individual boundaries. We recommend the **CRISP framework**.
2. **Equal Access to Opportunities:** This ensures that all voices are represented. It involves creating opportunities for everyone to contribute across marginalised individuals and communities, creating space for them to share their perspectives and promoting **respect for everyone's lived experiences, identities and cultural backgrounds**.
3. **Open Communication:** Encourage clear, honest, and open communication. This includes expressing thoughts, concerns, and boundaries freely without fear of judgement or retaliation. **Normalise "No"**, Make it clear that "no" is a complete sentence. Performers should **feel empowered to express discomfort without fear of judgement**. Creating a space where performers and directors can **have honest conversations about comfort levels, concerns, and creative ideas**. **Active Listening must be an applied practice.** Participants and collaborators should listen actively and empathetically, seeking to understand before responding. This ensures that all voices are acknowledged and considered. Directors and training leaders should have recurring active listening practices to ensure that all collaborators feel heard AND understood.
4. **Accountability:** Ability to hold individuals accountable for maintaining the principles of the creative practice space, without giving weight to their power in the space of the creative processes. This includes **addressing conflicts and misunderstandings constructively and respectfully**. Scheduling **regular check-ins** throughout the creative process to ensure that artists feel supported and heard. Reminding us that consent is ongoing, not a one-time conversation. It is also important that those holding accountable **address their concerns without guilt and without shaming those who are being held accountable**. The onus of listening is on those being held accountable so as to respect the values of **impact over intention**.
5. **Acceptance of Discomfort:** Embracing discomfort as part of the growth process and understanding that meaningful dialogue and artistic exploration often involve navigating challenging or uncomfortable topics. **Vulnerability is not a weakness, but an artistic strength.** It is important to acknowledge that sensitive material can be challenging while also being liberating. Exploring some contexts requires artists to stretch their emotional range to create richer art. **However, the distinction between discomfort and harm needs to be made, knowing that it is individualistic.** Creating work that triggers individuals can be harmful if not approached through the right process. Artists must feel empowered to say "no" and to explore discomfort within a supportive framework. The idea isn't about pushing boundaries for the sake of pushing them. It's about fostering an environment where **discomfort is a stepping stone, not a dead end**.
6. **Commitment to Learning:** Approaching the space with **a willingness to learn and grow** involves being **open to new ideas, constructive feedback, and self-reflection keeping aside one's own preconceived notions and prejudices**. Artistic Spaces must create a safety net through ongoing consent checks, clear communication about boundaries, and a culture of respect. This commitment to learning fuels artistic expression and leads to more nuanced, authentic art. Ultimately, brave and open spaces allow artists to not just feel comfortable, but to **thrive** in their artistic exploration, leaving audiences deeply moved by the stories they tell.

7. **Confidentiality:** Maintaining the confidentiality of personal stories and experiences shared within the space is paramount for **fostering trust, openness, and a supportive environment** between collaborators. This allows them to be vulnerable and honest in sharing personal experiences, emotions, and concerns **without fear of judgement or repercussions** while enabling trust between them. It requires **careful management, clear communication of expectations, and a commitment to upholding the trust** placed in the space.

8. **Vocabulary:** We propose to provide each space with a **vocabulary toolkit for respecting diversity** in and using the right vocabulary, not just to avoid offensive terms, but **actively choose language that respects and acknowledges both diversity and individuality**. By integrating these practices, performance spaces can become more open, respectful, and empowering for all involved. It fosters a welcoming environment, strengthens storytelling by reflecting the real world, and ultimately enriches the creative process for everyone.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCE BUILDING

**BRAVE SPACES CREATIVE INDIA** commits to training individuals as **Brave Spaces Moderators** and/or **Consent Informed Artists** through robust online and in-person modules by the pioneers of this work. Both modules will be contextualised to India.

1. **Brave Space Moderator:** This will be an 8 hour module with basics of consent and conflict resolution tools. This can be taken by training facilitators and coaches across artistic disciplines in India. This module can also be used by directors, producers, stage managers as an additional training for creating safe and brave space agreements for their ensembles and spaces. We shall have onboard with us one representative from each space who will train with us on how to initiate this conversation with their ensemble and come up with a **BRAVE SPACES AGREEMENT** together, specific to their working space which will constitute of their definition of SPACE and their understanding of what makes them feel BRAVE while creating a piece of art.
2. **Consent Informed Artist:** This will be an 8 weekends, 64 hour module that will cover basics of gender, sex and sexuality, advanced consent understanding, barriers vs boundaries, power dynamics in artistic disciplines, trauma aware approaches to rehearsing and opening and closure practices. Our vision is to foster a culture of consent in performance spaces nationwide, one space at a time. We firmly adhere to the policy of **'People Before Art'** and that is what we hope to achieve through our endeavours.

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