⚖️ Exercise: Builder's Code Workshop

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☰ Tags	

Co-create a group code of conduct rooted in dignity, respect, and accountability—in the participants' own words.

Purpose

When participants create their own rules, they own them. The Builder's Code becomes the foundation for trust, feedback, and peer support throughout the program.

Time

20 minutes

Materials Needed

- Large poster paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Sticky notes (for individual contributions)

Instructions

Part 1: Individual Brainstorm (5 min)

Prompt:

"Think about the kind of group you want to be part of. What values matter to you? What ground rules would make you feel safe, supported, and challenged to grow?

Write 1-3 'code' statements on sticky notes. Use plain language—the grittier, the better."

Sentence starters (optional):

- "Builders..."

- "We..."

- "In this space, we..."

- "We don't..."

Examples from past cohorts:

- "Builders help builders up."

- "We speak with dignity, even when calling out bullshit."

- "We show up, even when it's hard."

- "No gurus here—just cycle-breakers helping each other."

- "Confidentiality is sacred."

- "We celebrate wins and learn from failures."

- "We don't shame—we challenge with respect."

Part 2: Group Share & Synthesis (10 min)

Process:

1. Participants post their sticky notes on the board

2. Facilitator reads them aloud (or have participants read their own)

3. Group clusters similar ideas

4. Discuss: What themes emerge? What's missing?

5. Narrow to 5-8 core statements that resonate with everyone

Facilitator role:

- Guide, don't dictate—let them write 80%

- Only add essentials for safety/compliance (confidentiality, respect, consent)

- Push for specificity: "What does 'respect' look like in action?"

Part 3: Commitment (5 min)

Process:

- Finalize the Builder's Code on the poster

- Everyone signs it (literally—pen to paper)

- Display it prominently in every session

- Read it aloud together at the start of each module (optional ritual)

Facilitator script:

"This is your code. These are the agreements you're making with each other. When someone breaks the code, we call it out—with dignity. When someone lives the code, we celebrate it. This is how we build trust."

Facilitator Tips

- Avoid corporate/institutional language—let their voices lead

- If conflict arises later, refer back to the code: "What did we agree to?"

- The code can evolve—revisit it mid-program or when issues come up

- Make a digital copy for the alumni network (they'll reference it after graduation)

Sample Builder's Code (from Houston Pilot Cohort)

1. **Builders lift builders.** We show up for each other.

2. **What's shared here, stays here.** Confidentiality is sacred.

3. **We speak truth with respect.** Call out bullshit, but never shame.

4. **We celebrate wins and learn from failures.** Both are part of the journey.

5. **No gurus, no pedestals.** We're all cycle-breakers figuring it out together.

6. **We give feedback to help, not to hurt.** Be honest, be kind, be specific.

7. **We own our mistakes and make amends.** That's how we grow.

8. **Rest is not weakness.** Builders need recovery time too.

Post-Workshop

- Type up the final code and share it in the cohort Slack/Notion/group chat

- Print copies for everyone's workbook

- Reference it throughout the program: "That was a real Builder's Code moment —thank you."