



Information and Code of Conduct for Participants

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Nell Hardy

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Response Ability Theatre (RAT) is committed to facilitating spaces where our participants can be authentic, curious, creative, and build community.

We are also committed to making sure as far as is possible that no participant comes to harm as a direct result of participating with us, while treating everyone aged 18 or over as adults and honouring everyone's right to make their own decisions.

This is a delicate balance, and this code sets out how we look to achieve it.

Working Principles and Safety Guidelines

By participating in a RAT project or session, participants are agreeing to work according to the Working Principles, and agree that the Safety Guidelines will be followed when the Working Principles are breached. These have been co-created with the community and are designed to be in participants' best interests.

Please find the Working Principles in appendix 1 and the Safety Guidelines in appendix 2.

Safeguarding Policies

You have a right to know what our processes are when we become aware of a safeguarding concern, and what you can expect from us if you are ever involved in such a concern.

Our Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy (18 years and over) and our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (under 18) are both available on our website.

The most important things for you to know are:

- ✧ we recognise that all our participants, being trauma survivors, are vulnerable. We also recognise that this is different from having care and support needs in a legal sense, and assume that everyone has capacity to make their own decisions unless it is proven otherwise.
- ✧ whatever the circumstances, we will involve individuals as much as is possible in any actions we take in response to safeguarding concerns pertaining to them.

Relationships With Other Participants

It is a natural part of building communities that participants will form friendships and will become closer to some fellow participants than to others. Sometimes participants may invite existing friends and/or family members to attend sessions with them. We welcome all of this.

We also need to make sure that the spaces we create are equally inviting to all participants, regardless of whether they have friends and/or family in the room with them or not - and to prevent participants from coming to harm as a result of relationships formed or deepened through RAT participation as far as is reasonably in our power.

Managing Prior Relationships

If you have an existing relationship with another RAT participant, you do not have to keep it a secret - but we ask that you:

- ✧ actively seek to work with others in the space as well;
- ✧ allow the other participant(s) to engage with the work on their own terms, and refrain from volunteering them for opportunities or tasks when they are present and capable of volunteering themselves;
- ✧ ask their permission privately before volunteering them for opportunities or tasks when they are not physically present to volunteer themselves;
- ✧ refrain from sharing information about the other person without having their permission to do so, especially if the information is sensitive;
- ✧ encourage the person to communicate with RAT staff directly about their attendance plans, rather than communicating their plans through you.

Contact Details

Some of our participants may choose to share their contact details with each other, and that is their prerogative.

Others may not want to do this. We want to remind our participants that there could be many reasons for someone not wanting to share their contact details, and it is unlikely to be a personal reason against the individual. Therefore, please feel free to say no if someone asks you for their contact details, and please do not take it as a personal rejection if someone does not want to share their contact details with you.

If you reach out to connect with another participant personally, we recommend that you offer them your contact details in the first instance, rather than asking for theirs.

If you wish to communicate something to a participant or participants in the group but do not have their contact details and/or do not want to give your own, you may send the message to info@responseabilitytheatre.com, noting whether you want the message to reach all participants or specific individuals. If this is an invitation to an event (a show you are in, for example), we will exercise our own discretion and either agree to forward it, or explain to you why not if we don't. In other instances, we can contact the individuals to check if they are happy for us to forward your message, and then do so if we have their permission. We are happy to facilitate short interactions in this way but ask you to be sparing in how often you ask us to do this as it could become labour intensive for us.

Gifts and Loans

RAT participants come from various walks of life and have different resources at their disposal. It is vital that differences in circumstances do not influence the power dynamics in our spaces.

In general, we strongly recommend that participants do not give each other material gifts (by which we mean gifts that cost money), and do not lend each other money.

If you do give someone a gift, we ask that its value be less than £20. If you do lend someone money, we ask that you only lend up to £20 at a time (in other words, if you lend someone up to £20, you wait for them to pay you back before lending any more).

If you want to give someone a gift worth more than £20 or to lend someone more than £20, please contact our Designated Safeguarding Lead beforehand to explain:

- ✧ what you want to give/lend them and why;
- ✧ the nature of your relationship with the person, why you believe they would be comfortable receiving this gesture, and why you are comfortable making it;
- ✧ how you are making sure this person does not receive the gesture as a form of grooming, and confirming that you have not been asked or in any other way coerced by the person to make this gift/loan.

We will then advise you on whether or not we think it is appropriate for you to make this gift/loan. We may have to contact the other participant before making a decision on this.

If we advise you not to make the gift or loan and you do so anyway, we may have to exclude you from RAT opportunities for a period of time.

If we find out that you have made a gift or loan of more than £20 without consulting us, we may have to do the same.

After three instances of you telling us that you are making/receiving a gift/loan to/from the same person, if all has gone smoothly, we will consider that a stable connection and tell you that you no longer have to inform us when you make that participant a gift or loan. We may continue informally to check in with each of you every so often to make sure all is well. You are always welcome to reach out to us yourselves if you have a concern.

If you already have a relationship with another RAT participant in which you are in the habit of making or receiving gifts or loans to/from them, or they employ you/are employed by you, please inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. We will confirm the information with the other person, but will not intervene in an existing relationship unless we have clear reason to believe that there is a safeguarding concern related to it. We may informally check in with each of you every so often to make sure all is well. You are always welcome to reach out to us yourselves if you have a concern.

Gifts from RAT

Sometimes, we offer participants financial gifts to say thank you when we share work in which they have participated with the public. This is not a payment for work or a social gift, but an acknowledgement of the intellectual property the participant has shared with us. You automatically have our permission to accept these gifts, but do not have to accept them if you do not want to do so.

We will always seek to make clear whether you are participating in a project or being brought in as a freelancer to deliver a piece of work. However, if you are not clear on which applies at any point, please let us know and we will explain the nature of the engagement we are offering you. There are legal differences in what you can expect of us and what we can expect of you depending on whether you are involved as a participant or an employee, so we will always be happy to answer questions around this.

Hospitality

Sharing where you live with someone is a considerable act of trust that some will be far more comfortable making than others, for a range of reasons.

In general, we strongly recommend that participants do not share their address with other participants, and do not invite other participants into their homes, especially overnight.

If you want to invite a participant into your home, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead beforehand to explain:

- ✧ why you want to meet them there;
- ✧ who else will be in your home at the time;
- ✧ why you believe the person would be comfortable with the invitation, and confirming that they have not asked or in any other way coerced you into inviting them.

We will then advise you on whether or not we think it is appropriate for you to make this invitation. We may have to contact the other participant before making a decision on this.

If we advise you not to invite them and find out that you have done so anyway, we may have to exclude you from RAT opportunities for a period of time.

If you invite someone into your home without informing us, we may have to do the same.

If we agree that you may invite the person into your home and they accept the invitation, we will ask you to tell us the time and date on which you will be meeting there, and we will make sure you both have the Designated Safeguarding Lead's contact details.

After three instances of you going into someone else's home or having someone in your home, if all has gone smoothly, we will consider that a stable connection and

tell you that you no longer have to inform us when you invite that person or accept an invitation from that person. We may continue informally to check in with each of you every so often to make sure all is well. You are always welcome to reach out to us yourselves if you have a concern.

If you already have a relationship with another RAT participant in which you are in the habit of going into their home or you going into their home, please inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead. We will confirm the information with the other person, but will not intervene in an existing relationship unless we have clear reason to believe that there is a safeguarding concern related to it. We may informally check in with each of you every so often to make sure all is well. You are always welcome to reach out to us yourselves if you have a concern.

Relationships With Staff And Volunteers

As a survivor-led organisation, we try to make as little distinction between how we treat our participants and how we treat our staff and volunteers as possible. We recognise and celebrate that friendships may form between anybody in a RAT space.

For everyone's sake, however, we hold our staff and volunteers accountable to extra levels of professionalism.

The same rules apply for gifts, loans and hospitality between participants, staff and volunteers as between participants - but if a staff member or volunteer is found to have acted contrary to this code, it will automatically initiate a disciplinary procedure and could result in dismissal of that staff member or volunteer.

Disagreements and Complaints

If you are uncomfortable with how a participant, staff member or volunteer treats you, and it feels possible to address it with them, please do so. It may well be that you simply communicate differently, and there has been no intention to create that feeling in you.

If it doesn't feel possible to address it directly with the person, feel free to talk to a member of staff, who will either offer advice on how to go about addressing it, or intervene on your behalf, in discussion with you. They may need to let the Designated Safeguarding Lead know about the conversation and involve them in the course of action decided, if it is not the Designated Safeguarding Lead that you go to in the first instance.

If you do not feel able to address it with anyone on the staff team, or your concern is about the Designated Safeguarding Lead, you can contact RAT's trustees on trustees@responseabilitytheatre.com. If you need to make a formal complaint about RAT, this is also the address to use to do so.

You can find our full Complaints Policy on our website.

Financial and Other Support

We have a small budget from which we can reimburse participants' travel expenses for attending sessions if they would be unable to attend otherwise. For participants within London, we cap this at £15 per session; for participants from outside of London, we cap this at £25 per session. This means that if your journey costs more than these amounts, you will need to cover the excess above that amount.

We need to know at least a week in advance of a session if you need travel reimbursement, so we can make sure we have enough funds available. If you are coming from outside of London, we will need receipts; if from within London, we will ask you what journey you are making and work out what your journey has cost.

Other than this, we cannot provide hardship funds. If you need support applying for benefits or with other social and/or practical support, we can try to help you find the right people to speak to, but we are not equipped to provide that support ourselves.

If you need to speak to someone about your wellbeing and/or mental health, we will be more than happy to arrange a time to chat with you outside of participation sessions. Please bear in mind that we are not set up to provide ongoing clinical therapy, so any support we provide should not be counted as a replacement for official therapy or other clinical treatments.

Appendix 1: Working Principles

1. Agency With Bravery

Nobody has to take part in anything they don't want to do in RAT sessions. Or if they want to take part but need to adapt it slightly to their own needs, so long as that doesn't obstruct another person's participation, that is fine.

On the other hand, we invite people to try things out if they feel safe enough doing so, even if they don't know why we're doing it at first or it feels a bit silly - because stepping out of our comfort zone and "being" in a different way can be the first step in finding out something really important about ourselves.

If in the space and not participating, we ask people to be generous to those still working by giving authentic, sincere energy to them and the process.

In RAT spaces, we either are not, or bravely strive not to be, afraid of people's feelings, and create a space in which overwhelm can coexist with equilibrium if it wants to do so.

2. Allow The Process To Happen

We all have to put up so many defences in the world around us that reaching a place of authentic communication requires a reset of sorts.

RAT sessions involve experiential tasks, games and exercises that help us to find that reset. It ensures that our intellectual activity continues to be informed by what our bodies and spirits instinctively know.

We invite people to allow the process to happen without interrupting it for themselves or others, knowing that there will be time to reflect afterwards, and room to be held in whatever form that reflection takes.

3. We Will All Get It Wrong

It normally isn't hard to tell when someone is making a mistake and when someone is intentionally causing offence.

To learn from mistakes, we need to be shown grace.

If we can all start with the assumption that everyone will say something ignorant at some point, and there is space to grow from that, we set each other free.

4. Compassionate Compromise

Trauma leaves us all with very different needs - and sometimes our needs will conflict with those of someone else in the space. That's OK.

If we can be open about it and work out a compassionate compromise, we have an opportunity to open our hearts and minds to another person in a way we may not usually get to do.

We try to avoid saying that we aim to make the space equally comfortable for everyone. Partly because the work often takes us a little out of our comfort zones, and partly because an assertion like that risks gaslighting someone who ends up making bigger sacrifices than others here and there.

Instead, we strive to make the space equally challenging for everyone. We're still unlikely to achieve that, but it at least reminds us to keep our awareness of each other and our capacities to compromise alive.

5. Balance The Space

In spaces where so many of us have not been free or able to communicate as we have needed, it is particularly important that we remain alert to the different textures of presence in the space, and acknowledge them all.

So we ask our participants to notice if they are big talkers, or communicate better through movement, writing, drawing, eye contact, breath - and notice that in each other, too.

If you're a big talker, are you listening out for what isn't being said? If you're a quiet type, are you as present as you could be on your own terms? At any one moment, do you feel like everyone around you is occupying the same space - and if not, what can we do to help?

6. We Are All Survivors

And therefore, we all at least on some level "get it."

And therefore, we are all vulnerable.

This means we all have to look after each other more than in other settings.

In therapy, this wouldn't be helpful - and we certainly aren't setting out to provide therapy.

But it provides a perfect opportunity for learning how to model the kind of person you would want others to be to yourself in a trauma-conscious world.

Appendix 2: Safety Measures

Level 1 concern - if somebody's conduct could be interpreted as rude, unwelcoming or aggressive but there is room for interpretation: e.g. frequently looking at their phone, cutting people off, sniggering or glaring at people during tasks.

Action - facilitator or welfare lead chats with this person in the next break or at the end of the session to check if they are alright; ascertain if there is a reason for what they are doing and if there is anything we can do to help; if they are being misinterpreted, work either to help them reframe how that particular expression comes out or to help the group to recognise it as non-threatening, whichever is most appropriate to the situation. (E.g. if somebody habitually makes jokes to diffuse their anxiety but can choose not to, work with them to help them make sure these jokes are not at anyone else's expense and are held to themselves at times where they could disrupt others' processes; whereas if somebody has an involuntary movement or sound that they cannot control, work to normalise it within the space as not a sign of distraction or avoidance in this person.)

Level 2 concern - if conduct that has been processed through a level 1 measure with an agreement to amend it continues repeatedly; or an action is carried out that could escalate and become dangerous if unchecked (e.g. moving someone out of the way with low force, or touching someone in a way that they are clearly not consenting to); or a level 3 unacceptable thing is said or done but it seems very likely to have been a snap trauma response and beyond their control.

Action - facilitator or welfare lead talks to this person either in the next break or at the end of the session, or immediately if the situation requires it, to ascertain why the action was taken, compassionately find a strategy for preventing it, and make clear that if it happens again the person may have to leave the session or possibly be asked not to come back for a time.

Level 3 concern - if someone is verbally or physically violent and/or abusive towards the room as a whole or someone inside it: e.g. intentionally hurting someone, lashing out with discriminatory or abusive language, targeting someone; if someone is clearly under the influence of drugs or alcohol, is trying to give substances to someone else or is advertising that they have substances on them.

Action - person is asked to leave the room with the welfare lead immediately. Group decides as a whole whether the person should be allowed back in if an apology is made; if they should be asked to leave for that week but welcome back next time; or if they should be barred for a longer period of time (3 months, 6 months, 9 months or a year). Decided by a vote.

Level 4 concern - behaviour puts the person or someone else immediately in danger, e.g. brandishing or advertising possession of a weapon; threatening or trying to do serious damage; committing a hate crime.

Action - everyone else made safe as first priority; facilitator then calls emergency services.