

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT MEETINGS

It helps everyone participate and keeps everyone safe.

UNA gatherings where sensitive topics may arise can cause members distress. When planning and hosting gatherings, consider what topics might come up. Be particularly attentive to issues like suicide, violence, overdose, and abuse.

- Consider whether the sensitive topics are appropriate for the planned gathering. There may be a better venue to address them.
- If sensitive topics may arise, provide clear advance warning to those who may attend. For example, note the issues that might arise when sending invitations by email.
- Ensure those hosting the gathering have a list of resources available to them beforehand. This could include Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) contact numbers, the suicide hotline (988), or other mental health supports.
- At the beginning of the gathering, provide a clear warning about the content that might arise and let those attending know that they should feel free to leave for that portion of the gathering if they wish to. If they choose to stay, encourage participants to leave and seek support if they become overwhelmed.
- If a participant exhibits signs of distress during a discussion, pause the gathering or send someone who feels comfortable to check in on the person. Sometimes, compassionate listening will be enough support. If not, refer the person to the resources previously gathered.
- Where appropriate, consider sending gathering hosts or other union leaders to training to increase their ability to intervene. Courses could include Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training or Mental Health First Aid.
- Remember to take care of yourself and address vicarious trauma. Intervene only to the extent you are able and comfortable, and seek support for yourself in challenging situations.

For more information, see see UNA Policy "*Meetings 1.5 General – Content Disclaimer Policy for Sensitive Topics*."



[www.una.ca/mentalhealth](http://www.una.ca/mentalhealth)