

## **Group Agreements for Online Earth Signs Experiential Group**

Group agreements create the “*temenos*”, the sacred space, inside of which we are able to participate in the sacred mysteries of symbolism, and to invoke the gods. Since we are coming from many different grounds and places, the agreements are especially important to help create coherence and resonance among us.

In that spirit, these are the baseline agreements I ask that everyone agree to prior to our first meeting. Group agreements are always a work-in-progress. We will check in at our first meeting to see if there are other requests and ideas, and our agreements may evolve as we continue in our time together.

**Attendance:** Regular and consistent attendance is the foundation of a solid and powerful group experience. All members are asked to make a commitment to attending every session except where impossible due to pre-arranged vacation, illness, or unusual circumstances. Attendance at the first session is required, as this is where the group will commit to our shared agreements together.

**Confidentiality:** One of the most important ingredients to create a felt sense of safety for all members of the group is that all participants and the facilitator agree to keep confidential anything shared by other group members. Though participants are encouraged to discuss what they have learned and share reflections on conversations, it is important to keep names and individual experiences private. The only exception is when a participant shares information that gives the facilitator reasonable cause to believe there are threats of serious harm to the participant or others. Every effort will be made to discuss this with the participant before the facilitator exercises their obligation to report the situation to the proper agent.

**Recording:** Because of the nature of the group, the initial boundary for these groups will be no recording of the meetings except for infrequent didactic segments and some facilitated discussion. It is possible that groups may decide they are comfortable with recording later in the process, to support participants who must miss sessions, with consent from all participants.

**Technology:** We will use the Zoom application for these meetings. All participants are asked to arrive in the first group already fluent and comfortable in Zoom: how to attend meetings, change displayed name, share screen, and mute/unmute and toggle video off/on. In general, all participants also need to agree to attend classes with video enabled. Especially when fellow participants are sharing, it is meaningful to see the faces of others. Of course technology issues arise and sometimes the dog needs to be let out. But where possible, please plan to have your camera on.

**Participation:** Everyone is asked to participate in the experiential model, but participation takes different forms for different people at different times, depending on background, introversion/extroversion, learning style, and so on. No one is required to

participate in a particular exercise or conversation if they do not wish to, and no one is expected to educate anyone else by sharing experiences or stories. Each person decides how much vulnerability they are comfortable engaging. In addition, each participant accepts full responsibility for their own choices and actions and agrees to release, indemnify, and hold the facilitator harmless from any and all such actions.

**Psychological Safety:** While there is no such thing as a totally safe space, all participants are asked to make our shared space safer to participate in by committing to treating one another with respect and dignity and engaging with all participants with an attitude of openness, non-judgment, curiosity, and kindness. In language that is more astrological, to make our group a habitat welcoming of the entire Circle of Animals (*'zodiac'*) of which we are a part inside and out. The orientation of this group and the facilitator is explicitly anti-oppressive: this means that we recognize the harm that racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, human species-ism and other ways of Othering and hierarchy have caused harm to living beings including most or all group participants. As well, we recognize that these ideologies have contoured and shaped the astrological imagination historically, and can contour and shape group learning environments. All participants are asked to be mindful of ways these cultural norms may influence your sharing or group dynamics. When sharing about heavier subjects such as these 'isms, also be mindful that members of the group may be survivors for whom what one is sharing may be difficult or harmful.

**Self-Care:** Each person is responsible for their own psychological well-being in the group. The purpose of this group is educational and creative-expressive; it is not group psychotherapy nor an encounter group. While it's likely and desirable that you will experience psychological growth through our work together, and you may choose to share emotionally significant material, our primary purpose is to learn and create together. The course is not an appropriate place to work out trauma, interpersonal difficulties, and other issues better suited to psychotherapy.

**Experiential Instructions:** When we are engaged in experiential processes, all participants are asked to follow the instructions given by the facilitator. Instructions will be shared ahead of processes and can be discussed and adapted in advance if needed. However, once we are "in" a process, please follow the agreed instructions or ask for facilitator assistance rather than exit the agreed process.

**These Are Guidelines to Support Learning, Connection, and Play:** All of these guidelines are just that, guides. We all sometimes make errors; harm can sometimes occur when there isn't the intent for harm. All that is asked is that we aspire to the above, acknowledge and embrace accountability when we fall short, and continue to support one another to create a shared habitat where each person and all of the creatures within each person can live their best lives — and have a really good time!

**Love Love Love:** Love may not be all we need, but it's definitely one thing we need! When in doubt, return to the place of Love (thanks bell hooks!).