

## UNCOMMON PARTICIPATION POLICY

This policy outlines Uncommon's commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all members, including facilitators, participants, parents, and carers. It establishes clear expectations for respectful and positive participation, and it describes our neuro-affirming approach to addressing challenges that may arise during sessions to ensure every member feels valued and supported.

### **Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to all members of Uncommon, including session facilitators, participants, parents, and carers, who participate in our live sessions or community events.

### **Expectations**

At Uncommon, we aim to foster a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all members feel welcome and comfortable. We encourage all participants to try their best, and we will always respect their efforts. We recognize that many of the young people we work with may be anxious, demand avoidant, or struggle to navigate social situations. Therefore, we adopt a flexible, restorative approach to working with our members.

Our expectations for success are built around three core values:

- 1. Be Kind:** Help all members feel welcome and included
- 2. Be Safe:** Create a safe gaming, social, and learning environment
- 3. Be Respectful:** Even if you're not personally interested, respect the choices, intentions, and feelings of others

Building a kind, safe and respectful environment starts by us creating supportive spaces within which we encourage positive participation. In this policy we set out our commitment to creating a supportive environment, and the actions that we take to support young people should they struggle to participate positively.

## Safeguarding

At Uncommon, we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of all participants. While we strive to provide a supportive environment, there are certain topics that are beyond the scope of our service and require specialized care. These topics include:

- Discussions of violence or violent bullying
- Eating disorders
- Suicidal ideation or self-harm

We are not equipped to engage in these discussions, as they require professional intervention. If any of these topics arise during a session, facilitators will gently pause and redirect the conversation. We will then follow up with parents or carers after the session to recommend appropriate resources and support services.

## Creating a Supportive Space

To maintain a positive environment, we take the following steps:

- **Low-Demand Environment:** Sessions are designed to be low-pressure, low-demand and low-arousal using chat tools, anonymous quizzes, and sensory breaks to support.
- **Flexibility and Agency:** We encourage participants to engage in sessions in ways that work for them, and support their choices wherever possible.
- **Clear Expectations:** We explain how sessions work and set clear guidelines at the start of each session to reduce uncertainty and ease anxiety.
- **Role Modeling:** Facilitators act as role models in sessions, demonstrating self-awareness, self-care and positive, supportive social interactions

Facilitators will always use restorative and collaborative approaches to de-escalate situations:

- **Stay Calm:** If a participant becomes distressed, facilitators should stay calm to support co-regulation by modeling and offering supports
- **Allow Space:** Temporarily muting or turning off a participant's camera can give them the space to self-regulate.
- **Private Communication:** We offer private chat options for participants who feel overwhelmed and need additional support.

## Encouraging Positive Outcomes

As a neuro-affirming organization, we prioritize fostering growth and positive participation through a restorative approach rather than attempting to “correct,” “fix,” or “punish” behaviors. Our strategies include collaborative problem-solving, modeling positive self-care and constructive dialogue, gentle reminders, taking five-minute breaks, engaging in restorative conversations, and maintaining open communication with parents. Our goal is to create a welcoming environment where members can build their confidence in interacting with others:

### Green Zone:

Actions that align with our values of kindness, safety, and respect:

- Using kind, inclusive language.
- Respecting others' preferred names and pronouns.
- Embracing differences and diversity.
- Proactively communicating (e.g., “**I feel \_\_\_ when \_\_\_ because**”).
- Empathetic listening (e.g., “**What was that like for you?**”).

We will respond to these actions with encouragement and affirmation. Facilitators will celebrate participants' strengths and achievements and share these successes with parents

### Yellow Zone:

Occasional or unintentional actions which have the potential to dysregulate or worry others:

- Making jokes at others' expense
- Using overly demanding language
- Using swear words
- Expressing indifference (e.g., “I don't care about other people”)

We will respond with gentle reminders and redirections to help participants understand how their actions may affect others. If repeated, we may suggest a brief 5-minute break or temporarily turn off audio/video until the participant is ready to rejoin. After the session, we will engage in a restorative conversation to reaffirm the participant's value in the community and remind them of expectations.

## **Orange Zone:**

Behaviours related to difficulty with self-regulation, such as during a meltdown, or repeated unkindness to other participants:

- Screaming
- Displaying violent behaviour on screen, e.g. throwing objects
- Clear signs of distress
- Deliberate actions that may cause other participants distress

We will support the participant by gently explaining that they may need a break and encourage them to step away until they feel ready to return. Afterward, we will have a restorative conversation with the participant and follow up with parents to discuss what happened. If this is repeated, we may suggest that a parent or support person be present to help the participant co-regulate during future sessions.

## **Red Zone:**

Behaviours requiring immediate action and removal from the session:

- Sharing inappropriate content (e.g., nudity, graphic violence, drugs).
- Threats of violence/verbal aggression
- Hate speech (e.g., homophobic, racist language).

These actions will result in immediate removal from the session to ensure the safety and comfort of all participants. We will then hold a restorative conversation with the participant, follow up with parents, and work together on an action plan for support.

## **Severe Cases**

In rare cases, repeated harmful behavior may result in permanent exclusion from Uncommon sessions. This decision will only be made after careful review. Before this step is taken, we will always explore alternative support options with families to ensure we provide the best possible outcome for all participants.