

ACTIVITY 1

Develop an Advisory Contract

Purpose: Establish norms and expectations for how members of the group will treat each other, communicate, and problem-solve.

APPROXIMATE TIME:
2 x 30 minutes

MATERIALS:
Advisory journal
Chart paper and markers

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. When to Contract with Your Group

This activity is a key component of building community and developing the norms that will allow advisees to take risks, grapple with challenging content, and engage in civil discourse. We recommend that your advisees start the process of contracting in their third or fourth meeting, after they have learned each other's names and played some community-building games. Before leading this session, you should familiarize yourself with the **Contracting** strategy, which is explained in **Contracting in a Facing History and Ourselves Advisory** on page 8.

2. Introduce and Explain Journaling to Your Advisees

Advisees will reflect in their journals during this meeting. If you have not introduced journaling to your group, prepare to do so in advance by first reading **Journaling in a Facing History and Ourselves Advisory** on page 9. It is important that your advisees understand the purpose of journal writing, as well as how entries will or will not be shared. Exam "blue books" work well for advisory journals since they are small and inexpensive and advisees can store them in their advisory folders (see Advisor Notes in Activity 10: Advisory Bingo for tips about advisory folders).

3. Pacing This Activity

Because there are so many topics to cover in the opening weeks of advisory, such as name and introductory games, getting to know the advisor, and administrative tasks, you might find that you need two to three advisory sessions to complete the contracting process. Natural breaks in the activity occur after advisees have journaled and defined *contracting* and worked in small groups to create their list of norms, and after the group has voted to decide on the norms it commits to upholding during activities and discussions.

PROCEDURE:

1. Pass Out and Explain the Purpose of Advisory Journals

2. Reflect on Group Participation

- Ask advisees to respond in their journals to the following questions. Let them know that they will be sharing their ideas with a partner. Project or read aloud the following prompts one at a time.
 - Identify when you have felt comfortable sharing your ideas and questions in a class. What happened in those moments to help you feel comfortable?
 - Identify when you have had ideas or questions but have not shared them. Why not? What was happening at those moments?
- Then have advisees turn and talk with a partner, sharing their reflections about when they felt comfortable and uncomfortable sharing their ideas in a group.

3. Brainstorm Advisory Group Expectations

- Explain to the group that they will be working together to develop an advisory contract. A contract implies that all parties have a responsibility to uphold the agreement.
- Ask them to define *contract* and share their ideas about the purpose of contracts and the types of things they can protect. You might also define and discuss the term *norm*: a principle of right action binding upon the members of a group and serving to guide, control, or regulate proper and acceptable behavior.¹
- Divide advisees into small groups of three or four and ask them to come up with three norms that they feel are important for everyone in the group to follow in order to foster a safe and inclusive environment. They can write their three ideas in their journals or on chart paper that you hang on the wall.

4. Discuss Advisory Norms and Expectations

- Ask each group to present its list of norms. Then ask advisees to look for places where they can consolidate like ideas. Have an advisee read their new list out loud and discuss whether or not the groups feel like they have captured the norms that they think are important to uphold in advisory.
- Then start to finalize the list by asking advisees to write their names alongside norms and expectations that they think are important (or use sticky notes), or use "Stand Up/Sit Down" or "Cross the Line" from Activity 3: What Is Advisory? to allow advisees to explain their rationale for why they think an idea should or should not be included.

¹ "Norm," Merriam-Webster.com, accessed June 23, 2018.

5. Create and Sign the Contract

- After the group has agreed to its norms and expectations, have one or more advisees record the information on a large piece of chart paper and then ask everyone to sign their names. Hang the contract on the wall (or bring it to each advisory meeting to post if you are in a space such as the library or a conference room where you are not allowed to keep it hanging).
- Let advisees know that they will revisit and reflect on the contract over the course of the year, before and after challenging conversations and at the start of each section of *Community Matters*.

6. Reflect on the Process of Creating the Contract

Sit in a circle for a closing discussion about the activity and how the advisees felt about the way they worked together to create their contract. You might draw from the following questions:

- What process did your small group use to come up with your three or four norms? What do you think worked well in your small group? How do you think you could do better the next time you work in a small group?
- What process did our whole group use to come up with our contract? What do you think worked well in the process? How do you think we could do better the next time we work on a project in a whole group?

EXTENSIONS:

The following activities offer ideas for additional ways for your group to develop its advisory contract.

1. Reflect on a List of Norms

- If you think your group would benefit from starting the contracting conversation in a more concrete way, you can share a list of norms that other Facing History classrooms and advisories have developed. Ask advisees to discuss what they think about the following norms. Which ones do they think would help their group create a safe, respectful, productive learning environment?
 - Listen with respect. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
 - Make comments using "I" statements.
 - If you do not feel safe making a comment or asking a question, write the thought in your journal. You can share the idea with your advisor first and together come up with a safe way to share the idea.
 - If someone says an idea or question that helps your own learning, say thank you.

- If someone says something that hurts or offends you, do not attack the person. Acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt your feelings and explain why.
 - Put-downs are never okay.
 - If you don't understand something, ask a question.
 - Think with your head and your heart.
 - Share the talking time—provide room for others to speak.
 - Do not interrupt others while they are speaking.
 - Write thoughts in your journal if you don't have time to say them during class.
 - Journal responses do not have to be shared publicly.
- Then invite advisees to edit the list by deleting, revising, or adding to it.

2. Discuss Possible Scenarios

Another way to help advisees develop a contract is to have them envision what they would like to have happen during certain scenarios. Scenarios can be drawn from advisees' own experiences. They might include situations such as these:

- When we have an idea or question we would like to share, we can . . .
- When we don't feel comfortable sharing an idea out loud, we can . . .
- When someone says something that we appreciate, we can . . .
- When someone says something that feels confusing, we can . . .
- When someone says something that feels offensive, we can . . .
- To make sure all advisees have the opportunity to participate in a small- or whole-group discussion, we can . . .
- If we read or watch something that makes us feel sad or angry, we can . . .
- To show respect for the ideas of others, we can . . .