

HOW TO WRITE A COLLECTIVE CREDO



A credo is a formal statement of beliefs or principles, and it is closely related to a manifesto (which declares the intentions, motives, or views of a person or group). Credos use short, declarative sentences, but they can also use metaphorical comparisons to add surprising dimensions to the statement. Credos can be written individually and then blended together into a collective credo as a way to unify a group around common goals.

Directions for the group writing exercise:

1. As a group, read a couple of credo examples together.
2. The group should decide on the seed phrase that will be used. For instance, “I teach because...” or “respect is...”
3. Discuss a few strategies for successful writing. For instance, writers should begin each sentence with some variation of the seed phrase. For instance, in Terry Tempest Williams’ “Why I Write,” her variations include: I write because, I write to, I write against, I write for, I write in hopes of, I write towards, etc. In the Little Rock Writing Project credo, some of the variations include: “respect is,” “respect can,” “respect doesn’t,” and “respect may.”
4. Make a point of switching directions to describe goals, beliefs, habits, actions, and wishes. Make some statements plain and straightforward, some lyrical, some commanding, and some imagistic.
5. Make room for metaphorical language to compare one thing to another. Metaphors work best when they use sensory details to anchor the comparison. For instance, when searching for the right metaphor, you might ask yourself what does this look like, feel like, sound like, act like, taste like, when it appears in real life? In the Little Rock Writing Project credo, for example, “respect is a handshake, a fist bump, a high five.”
6. Write for 15-20 minutes without stopping to edit ideas.





7. Afterwards, everyone reads their own list out loud, or posts them on the wall for a gallery walk. During this sharing time, each person should write down their favorite “keeper” lines from each other's work.
8. Now it's time to build the collective credo. Appoint someone to act as recorder, and write down the group's favorite lines as they share them out loud. If possible, use a projector so that everyone can read the text as the group composes it.
9. The group might choose to discuss revision choices, like which lines might go best next to one another, or which lines should go at the opening and closing of the credo, so that the final product feels truly made by the collective.

RESPECT IS GROUND ZERO, THE STARTING PLACE.
THE JUMPING OFF POINT. RESPECT IS RECOGNIZING
WE ARE ALL HUMAN AND WE ALL HAVE A STORY.
RESPECT IS KINDNESS IN ACTION.
RESPECT IS THE PRECURSOR TO EMPATHY.
RESPECT IS THE REALIZATION THAT OTHERS ARE REAL
AND THEY HAVE THE SAME CLAIM TO THE WORLD AS YOU.
RESPECT IS THE HUMAN STORY
FOR LONGING, FOR CONNECTION, AND FULFILLMENT.
RESPECT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU MAY GIVE,
IT'S SOMETHING YOU MAY KEEP,
IT'S SOMETHING YOU'LL NEVER RUN OUT OF.
RESPECT IS A VERB. WAITING TO BE LAST
TO ALLOW OTHERS TO BE FIRST. COMPROMISING.
SAYING I LOVE YOU. RESPECT IS NOT USING
ALL THE HOT WATER. RESPECT LOOKS YOU IN THE EYE.
RESPECT SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND.
RESPECT IS A HANDSHAKE, A FIST BUMP, A HIGH FIVE.
RESPECT CAN BE LOST, BUT NOT DEMANDED.
RESPECT IS CALLING YOUR OPPONENTS IN, INSTEAD OF OUT.
RESPECT IS PUTTING DOWN YOUR PHONE
TO STOP, LISTEN, ENGAGE.
RESPECT MAY REQUIRE YOU TO SPEAK UP, OR TO REMAIN SILENT.
RESPECT IS GIVING UP YOUR BUS SEAT.
RESPECT IS SHARING HARDER.
RESPECT IS BOUNDARIES.
RESPECT IS MAKING BREAKFAST, TELLING JOKES, SAYING SORRY.
RESPECT DOESN'T MUMBLE UNDER ITS BREATH.
RESPECT IS BORN OF SELF-RESPECT.