HAND SIGNALS
FOR PARTICIPATORY DISCUSSION AND DECISION MAKING

These signals are a technique used to help facilitate a conversation for a group of people. They help to ensure that all voices are heard in a conversation or decision-making process. It's a sign language to allow people to constantly respond, keep to a process, and gauge the feeling of the room. There are many ways to join the conversation without interrupting the speaker or being interrupted. Like any language, there are a lot of variations on signals, here are some common ones! These have been developed over years, been used by many types of groups over many years. This can help speed up your decision making process. It's great for multi-lingual groups.
Voice your opinion without being forced into a YES OR NO binary.

![Diagram of hand signals]

Consensus (Latin origins) meaning literally to feel together. In practice, it’s forming an agreement or negotiation with a group of people. These signals help that process by allowing for nonverbal participation, and attempt to help everyone get what they need from that process (because it’s included collaborative egalitarian and participatory).

DIRECT RESPONSE TO SOMETHING THAT SAYS THEY SAID

POINT OF INFORMATION "I'VE GOT A RELEVANT POINT!"

QUIETLY, I'M LEAVING THE GROUP OR VETO!

QUICKLY UP!

"QUIET DOWN!": WHEN THE MEETING IS GETTING OUT OF CONTROL

VOTING STAND UP!

This voting process allows for varying degrees of opinion or support. If someone is going down in thumbs down, check in with them about their feelings (you might want to reconsider the proposal).

THUMBS UP: "STRONGLY AGREE."

THUMBS DOWN: "STRONGLY DISAGREE."

There's more to this than hand signals:

The Stack - the line of people who are going to speak
Facilitator - keeps track of the stack; turns the floor over from one speaker to the next; helps move through an agenda. The facilitator also helps to build fairness by observing the group dynamics.

Note Taker - to keep record of the meeting, set the action items of the do-to-list. Historical records are important for people who have missed the meeting!

The Vibe - reads the vibes, they're paying attention to the feelings in the room. Can call for a break or make an observation, check in with someone who needs to speak. This role is important for really intense or emotionally charged discussions.

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