

A Duty of Care Checklist for Leaders, Teachers, and Facilitators

1 Secure Informed Consent

Let participants know your approach may challenge their current thinking or assumptions. Frame it as an invitation to reflect, not a trap to expose their flaws.

2 Anchor in Respect and Dignity

Challenge ideas or behaviors, never the worth or identity of the person. Avoid language that shames, humiliates, or strips agency.

3 Stay Proportional

Introduce dissonance in manageable doses. Too much tension can overwhelm the nervous system and shut down learning (*fight/flight/freeze*).

4 Offer Multiple Paths to Resolve

Do not push your audience toward only one resolution that serves your agenda. Allow space for disagreement, alternative perspectives, or partial integration.

5 Provide Psychological Safety

Create a container where it's okay to struggle, feel discomfort, and ask questions. Remind participants that discomfort \neq danger.

6 Support Integration

Always pair the “disrupt” moment with tools for reflection and repair (journaling, small group discussion, debriefing). Ensure participants leave with more coherence, not more fragmentation.

7 Check Your Motive

Ask yourself: Am I doing this to empower learners or to secure agreement, compliance, or a sale? Transparency of motive is key to ethical practice.

8 Mind Trauma Histories

Remember: many people carry past experiences of coercion, gaslighting, or manipulation. What you see as “stretching” may feel like re-traumatization for someone else. Build in choice and gentleness.

9 Encourage Critical Thinking

Invite people to test ideas, not just absorb them. Frame dissonance as a chance to explore, not as evidence they “must” adopt your view.

10 Debrief and Close the Loop

Never drop participants in dissonance and leave them there. Always allow time to process, make meaning, and restore balance before closing.

Bottom Line: When used ethically, cognitive dissonance is a spark for growth. When misused, it becomes a lever for control. The difference lies in consent, proportionality, support, and respect for autonomy.