

Conversation cafe

The Conversation Café method was created by Susan Partnow, Habib Rose and Vicki Robin in Seattle in 2001.

You can read more about it [here](#).



Why?

To get people talking
and hear all views
and opinions.



How many people?

8 - 10 people



How long?

60 - 90 minutes

Purpose

This tool will help to get people talking, no matter what the subject. It's a flexible tool and can either break the ice or be used to allow for complete collaborative input.

This whole process is deliberately simple and is designed to give every participant space to speak.

It's a great way to enable all views to be shared. This tool is very similar to Circle Practice.

Ahead of the meeting, you need:

- A meaningful topic to discuss
- An idea of how long your meeting will last, and how long each person will have to speak
- An assigned host who will keep both time and topic on track

During the meeting

Step 1

At the start of your meeting, let everyone know what the meaningful topic is and how long the meeting will go on for.

You can also let all participants know how long they will have to speak when it is their turn.

Step 2

Read aloud the six foundation rules of a Conversation Cafe.



Foundational rules

1. **Open-mindedness:** Listen to and respect all points of view.
2. **Acceptance:** Suspend judgment as best you can.
3. **Curiosity:** Seek to understand rather than persuade.
4. **Discovery:** Question assumptions, look for new insights.
5. **Sincerity:** Speak what has personal heart and meaning.
6. **Brevity:** Go for honesty and depth, but be concise.

Step 3

Explain the layout of the cafe, that there will be four rounds and the use of a Talking Object

Step 4

Begin! The group sits in a circle and passes the Talking Object around clockwise.

A talking object

A Talking Object can be absolutely anything, it can be something that means something to you or something that doesn't; a salt- shaker, a stuffed toy, a pencil case, whatever you want.

Participants of the meeting will pass the object from one person to the next, and when you're holding the object, it's your chance to speak.

This is a simple yet powerful tool. It creates the capacity for everyone to hold the floor, and also creates equality. No matter who you are or where you're from, when you're holding the Talking Object it's your turn to be heard.

The Four Rounds

1. When holding the object, each person speaks briefly about the meaningful topic and expresses their views. There is no feedback or response.
2. Again, while using the Talking Object, each person speaks again after having heard round one. Usually in this round you'll find people either deepen their previous comments or their views may have shifted.
3. Open, free conversation. Remove the Talking Object and allow people to respond to each other's comments and speak when they feel it is right.
4. Using the Talking Object again, go round the circle and each person says briefly what has challenged, touched or inspired them during the meeting.



The history of these tools

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