

The world cafe

The World Cafe method was created by Juanita Brown, David Isaacs and friends in California in 1995.

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



Why?

Creating a living network of dialogue around questions that matter.



How many people?

6 - 10+ people



How long?

This tool should take around 1 - 2 hours

Introduction

Put simply, a World Cafe consists of three conversations or 'rounds' held across a number of tables. After each round, people move between tables, ready for the next question.

- There are 4- 5 people per table. During each round participants can write, doodle or draw, depending on how they want to feedback.
- There's no set plan for where people move, they can go where they choose.

- As the rounds go on, the questions should ask deeper questions.
- Using this method you can achieve complete 'cross-pollination' and a mixing of ideas and dialogue.

It encourages absolutely all participants to mix, and allows new conversations to begin with different people during each round. Because the conversations around tables are small, everyone gets a chance to contribute.

If you had 15 participants, labelled 'Person A' to 'Person O', the diagram below shows just how they might move between tables, spreading ideas and building new conversations throughout the meeting.

	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4	Table 5
Question 1 (20 minutes)	A B C	D E F	G H I	J K L	M N O
Question 2 (20 minutes)	F H O	A G N	B D M	C E I	K L J
Question 3 (20 minutes)	E L M	I J O	A K N	B F G	C D H

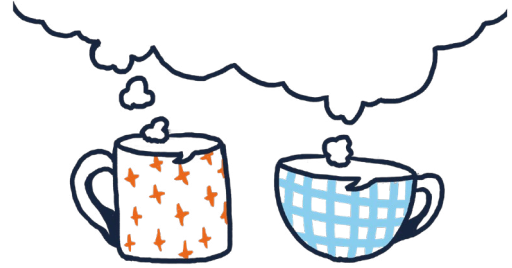
Ahead of the meeting, you need to:

- To set the context**
 Knowing the purpose of your cafe before you begin may seem like a simple task, but getting a very clear idea of what themes may come up, and what goals you'd like to reach within the meeting can shape how you set it up.
- To create a welcoming space**
 There's power in creating a space that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking. Both your invitation and the layout of your room should encourage people to feel comfortable.
- Paper, pens, sticky notes and other stationary**
 There should be one large piece of (flipchart) paper on each table and a variety of stationary, so that people can make notes together. Allow your participants to get creative and feedback in a way that they prefer, whether that's bullet points, mind maps or drawings.
- To assign hosts to each table**
 Each table should have a host who remains stationary and can input information from the conversations/ rounds that have come before. The hosts can also add to the central piece of paper as the conversations flow.
- Decide how you'll end each round**
 How will you signal to participants that it's time to move to another table? Will you shout a buzzword? Ring a bell? Play music?
- Be aware of Health and Safety**
 With so many people moving around, it's important to give participants enough space to walk safely around the room.
- Choose your questions**
 How will you get to the bottom of the issue you'd like to discuss? Choose your questions carefully before your event to enable deep conversation.

Examples of how questions may deepen in each round:

Goal: Practice more self-care strategies

1. What activities replenish/refresh/refuel you?
2. How does it feel when you make time for yourself?
3. How could you more regularly incorporate self-care activities into your life?



During the meeting

Step 1

Explain how the World Cafe will work and remind people to move around the room freely in between rounds and jot down feedback however suits them best (the more creativity, the better).

Step 2

Let people know what sound they will hear which will signal a new round.

Step 3

Begin! Time your rounds carefully in order to give equal weight to each question as it's asked.

Step 4

Each time you signal a new round, remind your participants which question they should answer during the allotted time.

Step 5

Once the World Cafe has ended, bring everyone back together in a circle. This is a good chance to ask participants how they found the experience and what hit home for them throughout the multiple conversations.

It's also a nice idea to end the meeting by having the host of each conversation speak through what's been captured at each table.

Reminder

1. Record your overall learning.

With so many people moving around the room, so many conversations happening at once and ideas flying all over the place, World Cafe's can feel very busy. During step four, whilst everyone reflects on their experience, it might be useful to employ a **Graphic Recording Artist** to create a piece of work that reflects the learning from the meeting overall.

These artists can condense huge amounts of information into easily understandable and accessible imagery.

2. Make the cafe work for you

You can bend the rules around timings and the number of participants. If you have fewer people involved, perhaps only put three chairs around each table. If you have more than three questions, add another round. Not enough time? Take only 10 minutes per round.



The history of these tools

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