

AGE CAFÉ: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIONS OVER CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

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Developed in partnership with the Beaverton City Library, Washington County Disability, Aging and Veterans Services, Beaverton Committee on Aging, Beaverton Center for Mediation and Dialogue, Older Adult Behavioral Health Initiative

TODAY'S AGENDA

- History, structure and goals of the Age Café
- Role of facilitators
- Café planning tips and resources
- Creating questions
- Navigating tricky situations

WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

- To create a space within space through ritual
- To create a deeper sense of community and connection
- To grow in appreciation of our shared wisdom on our life journey

WHAT ISN'T OUR PURPOSE?

- Being right or wrong (debate)
- Challenging or analyzing other people's comments
- To provide education
- To provide advice or counsel

**WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A
FACILITATOR AND A TEACHER?**

AN INVITATION TO A COMMUNITY SPACE:

- Step up, step back. Pay attention to the group process and make room for others.
- Use 'I' language to speak from your own experience. Avoid making generalizations or assumptions.
- Use this space to self-reflect and deepen your understanding of others' experiences. Avoid analyzing or challenging other's comments.
- Acknowledge and respect the diversity of ideas, cultures, experiences and identities, both seen and unseen. Remember, all are welcome.
- Know that it's always ok to pass.
- This is a confidential space.



*True belonging never
asks us to change who we
are.*

*True belonging requires
us to be who we are.”*

- Brene Brown

INTRODUCTIONS

PLEASE SHARE YOUR NAME AND
WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE TODAY?



WHAT MAKES A
CONVERSATION
MEANINGFUL?

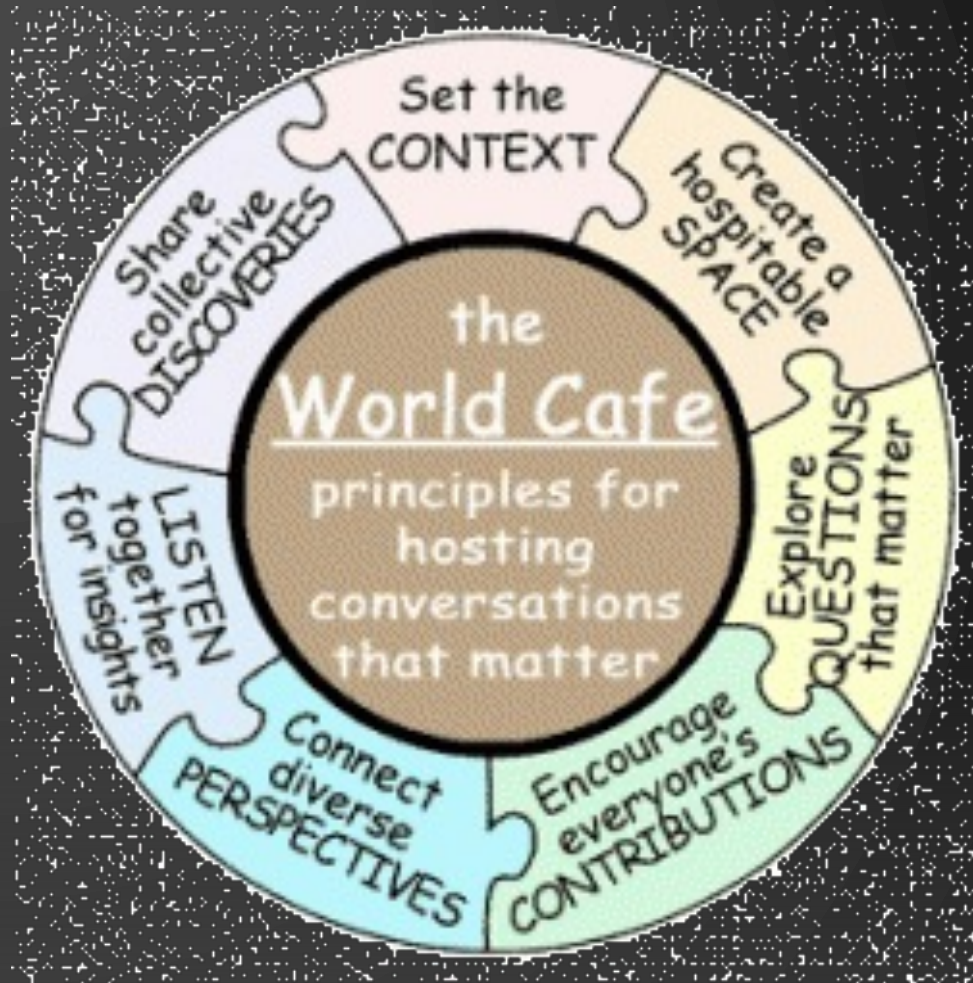


CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

- Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954) –
 - Reduces prejudice between group members
 - Broadens our worldview, deepens our connections, and fills us with hope.
 - Lessens judgement of other people, strengthen our view of individuals as being complex
 - Creates new points of view through dialogue and discussion
 - Integrates diverse individual perspectives into new collective perspectives

THE WORLD CAFÉ METHOD

- 1) Set the context
- 2) Create a hospitable space
- 3) Explore questions that matter
- 4) Encourage everyone's participation
- 5) Find things that people have in common
- 6) Listen for insights
- 7) Share with others!

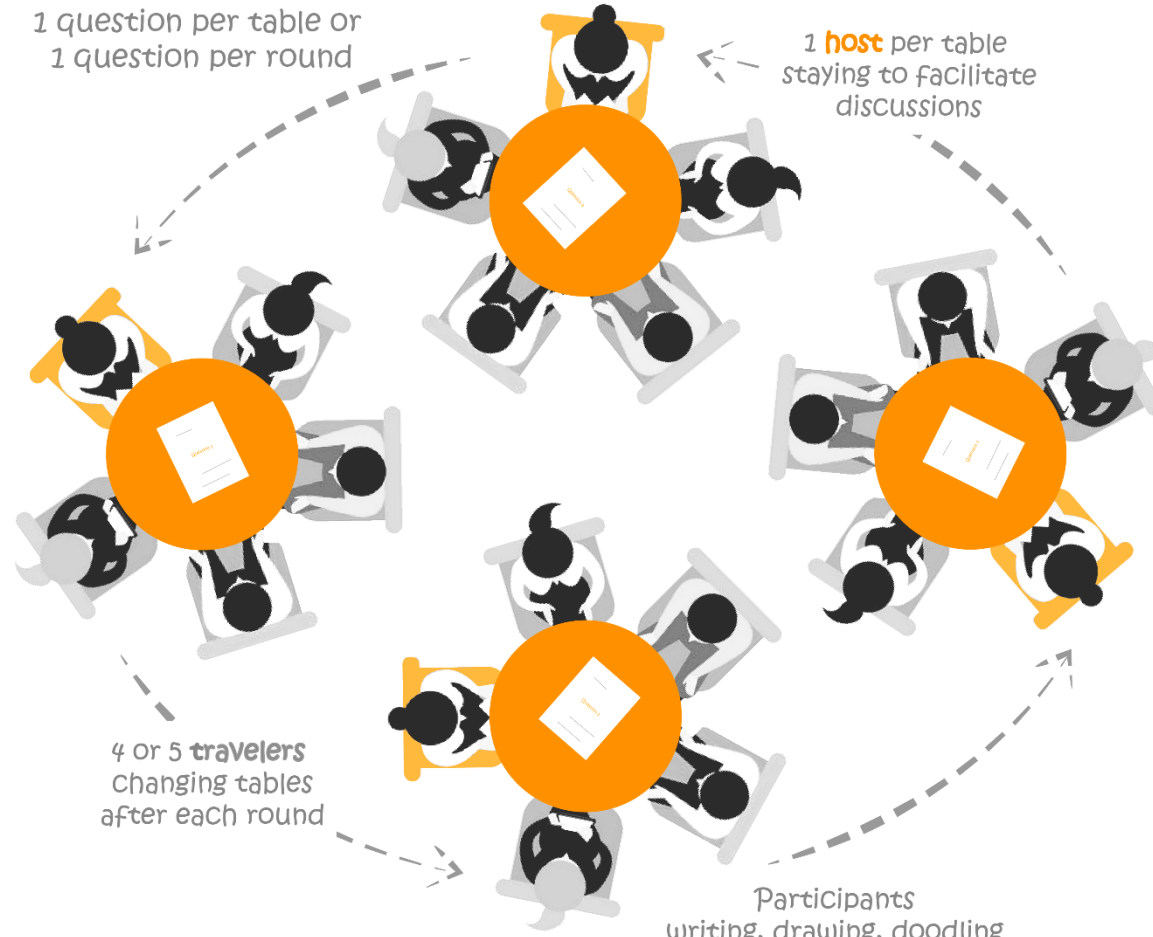


WORLD CAFE METHOD

3 or more rounds of conversation,
approximately 20 minutes each

1 question per table or
1 question per round

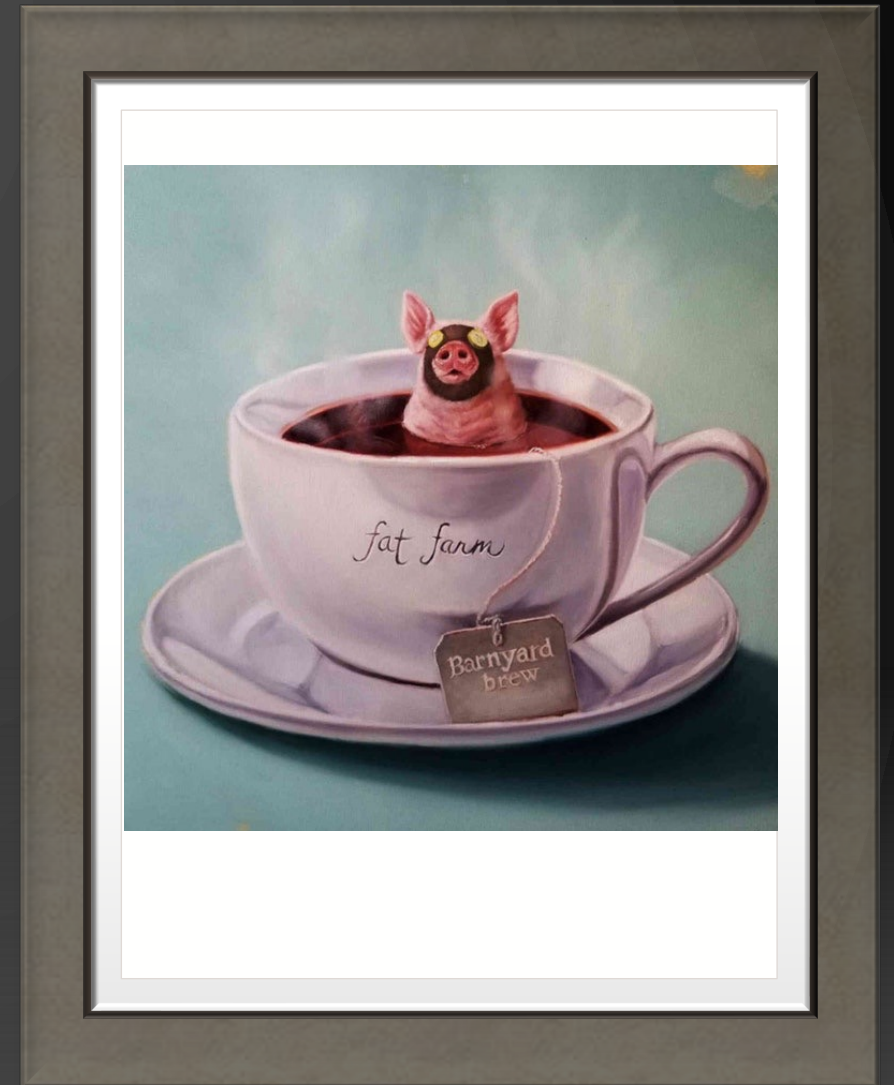
1 **host** per table
staying to facilitate
discussions



4 or 5 **travelers**
Changing tables
after each round

Participants
writing, drawing, doodling
key ideas

What gets in the way of
meaningful
conversations?



STRUCTURE OF THE CAFÉ

- Welcome time with food & drink, name plates, orientation to space
- Host(s) provide orientation to program, read of guidelines, introduce topic/theme of the day and questions
- Break out into small groups with one facilitator per 6-8 people
- Facilitators start with “round robin” introductions, then “popcorn” style discussion – 40-60 minutes
- Return to large group for closing and social time
- Resources for follow up – books, movies, articles, events

GREAT FACILITATORS...

- Make connections between group members
- Go with the “flow”
- Are non-judgmental
- Don't judge
- Create safe spaces
- Make sure everyone is heard

FACILITATOR ROLE AND TASKS

- Welcome people to the Café
- Be a timekeeper for the discussion
- Help group honor the agreements
- Look for opportunities to bring people into the discussion
- Move the discussion on if things get stuck
- Manage any difficult situations

Good conversations start with
good questions and good
questions come from good
inspiration



DISCUSSIONS ARE GROUP-DRIVEN, FACILITATOR-GUIDED

Possible topics/focus areas

- Transitions and Changes
- Gratitude
- Inspiration items/show and tell
- Beginner's Mind
- The Joy of the Ordinary
- An intergenerational community
- *What other topic ideas do you have?*

THE FACILITATOR ROAD MAP



<p>Observe, reflect, be still/silent. Sensory-based questions. Abstraction. Mindfulness and preparing for discussion.</p>	<p>What is it? How do you define it? What is going on?</p>	<p>Think of a time when you...., what memories do you have of...,</p>	<p>What did you learn? What does it tell you about yourself/your family/community? How does it shape your philosophy/values? What does it matter? How does it connect you to others?</p>
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CONVERSATION DEAD ENDS

THINGS TO AVOID:

- Close ended (without follow up)
- Extremes and dichotomies: “biggest”, “best”, “worst”, “least”, “most”, etc.
- Questions that need cultural context: “How did you feel when Old Yeller died?”
- Testing: “Why?”
- Judgment: “How can you say that?”
- Assumptions: “Why is it important to have a living will?”



Theme: Transitions



**“Growth is painful. Change is painful.
But nothing is as painful as staying
stuck somewhere you don’t belong.”**

N.R. Narayana Murthy

N.R. NARAYANA MURTHY



Still Life, Helen Searle, 1869

TRANSITIONS

Icebreaker: If you were a tree, what would be your favorite transition? Spring into summer, summer into fall, fall into winter, or winter into spring?

Discussion Questions:

- What is your definition of transition? Do you feel like you are at beginning of something, the end of something or the middle of something?
- What changes and transitions have you experienced through the aging process?
- How has your experience of transition in your life prepared you (or not) to face future transitions?

FACILITATOR VOCAB TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

- What I'm hearing you say is....
- How interesting that both you and Sally Jo had the same thought.
- I am interested to see how we started here and ended up here.
- Where do you think that response comes from?
- I'm noticing you nodding your head. Tell us about that.
- Dan, you seem to be deep in thought about something.
- That's an interesting idea – does anyone else have any thoughts on that?
- I had never thought of it like that before.

OPTIONS FOR CLOSING RITUAL

- Summary/reflection:
 - What is one thought, word or idea that will stay with you for the rest of the day?
 - What is one thing about your experience today that was unexpected?
 - What is one thought or idea that you want to explore further?
 - What is one question that you still have?
- Gratitude
 - What is one gratitude that you would like to share about our time together today?
- Acknowledging the efforts of everyone who attended

CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

- Groups members talking too much or too little
- Different ideas, perspectives
- Off-topic issues
- Higher needs situations – sensory, physical, cognitive limitations or strong emotional reactions



RETURN TO THE AGREEMENTS...

- Step up, step back. Pay attention to the group process and make room for others.
- Use 'I' language to speak from your own experience. Avoid making generalizations or assumptions.
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RESPONDING TO COMMON CHALLENGES

Difficulty

Some participants dominate discussion

Possible Reasons

The person may not feel they have been heard
They tend to be verbal in their processing

Possible Solutions

Listen seriously, demonstrate “hearing them” by active listening and respectfully cutting off – “let me see if I understood what you were saying (paraphrase) then say you want to hear from some of the quieter voices.”
*Be mindful to not just allow more time for people who share your opinion

Difficulty	Possible Reasons	Possible Solutions
Group isn't responding with relevant answers	Members of the group feel unsafe, the group is not ready to participate Questions are not specific enough	Try less serious conversation topics until the group begins to trust you and the process Test questions in advance by imaging how the group might answer, by answering the questions yourself.

Difficulty**Possible Reasons****Possible Solutions**

Members in the group are getting into a heated discussion. Or, one member is challenging the others' ideas or the facilitator.

The topic or question may be too loaded, provocative, challenging or triggering for some. There may not be trust among group members. The purpose hasn't been clearly established.

Acknowledge the difficulty of the topic and name the tension. Return to the purpose of the discussion: "We're here to listen and learn from each other, not to engage in debate or try to come to a consensus." or "Let's remember to speak from our own experience and know that there are no right or wrong answers." Take a break from discussion and breath. Move to a different question. Redirect side conversations to the larger group. Reestablish firm boundaries with conduct, especially if the group is no longer a "safe space" to talk.

Difficulty	Possible Reasons	Possible Solutions
Some people are not saying anything	Member may be shy or hesitant, others may be dominating, or they just want more time to process Members may prefer to listen	Try a “go-round” where each person answers the same question rather than responding to the comments of others (remind that it is always ok to pass!) Without calling on anyone specifically, offer up space for the quieter voices to weigh in to the topic

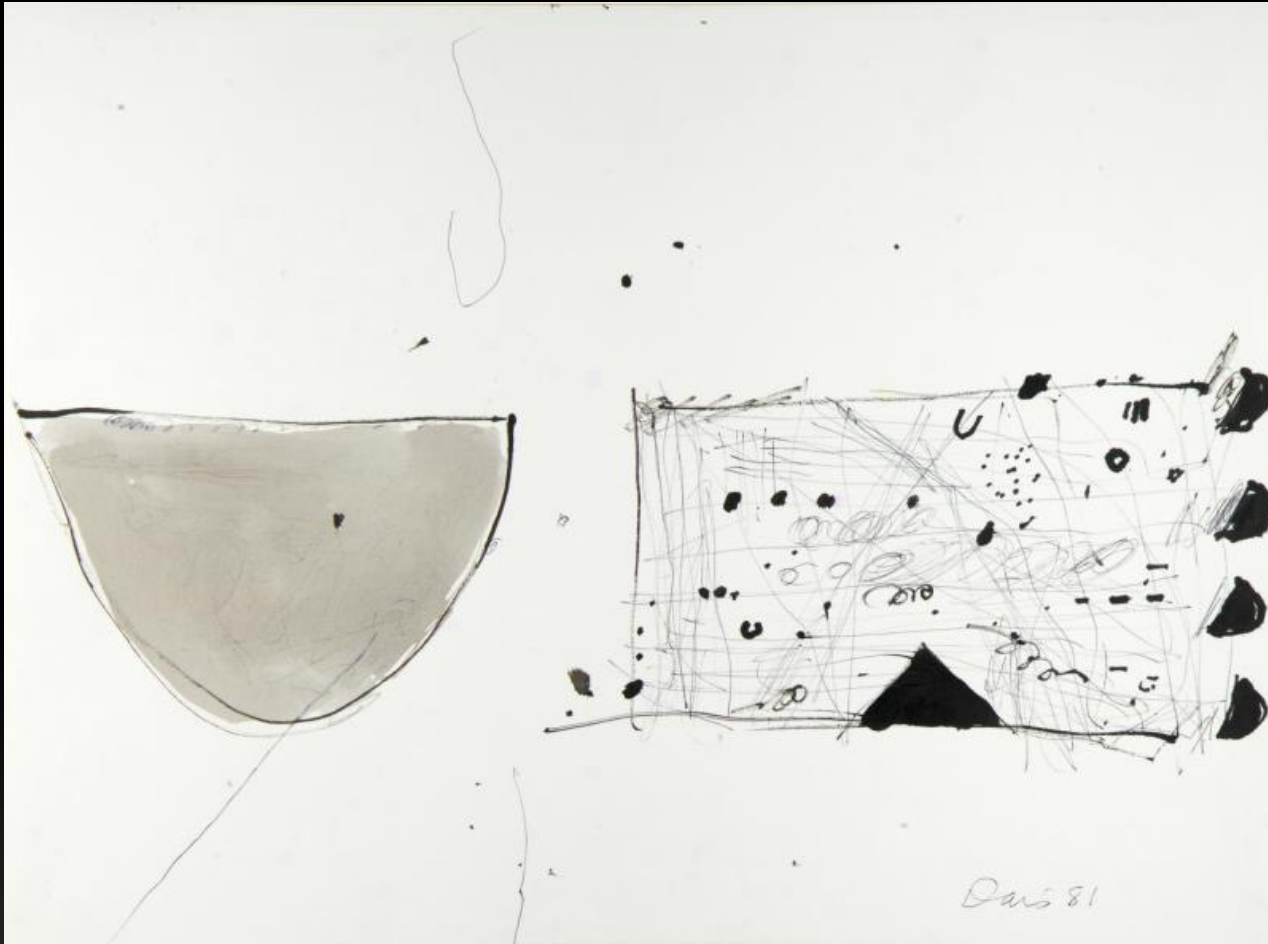
Difficulty	Possible Reasons	Possible Solutions
Group member shows strong emotions – such as crying, anger	Topic can be challenging for people	Allow for moments of silence Accept emotions as normal Acknowledge that this topic can bring up a lot of emotion, and appreciate their willingness to share with the group. Follow up 1:1 after session, ask for additional support.

Resources:

- *The World Café: Living Knowledge through Conversations that Matter*
- Death Café (US): www.deathcafe.com
- Oregon Humanities: [Toolkits and Discussion Guides](#)
- [Center for Civic Reflection](#)
- Death Café Book List: [On Death | Washington County Cooperative Library Services | BiblioCommons](#)
- <https://theradicalagemovement.wordpress.com/>
- “Real Talk” with Glennon Doyle
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4frO0PxLyYI>
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training:
www.gettrainedtohelp.com
- Death with Dignity Life File:
<https://deathwithdignity.org/life-file/>
- Dying to Talk: <https://dyingtotalk.org.au/discussion-starters/>
- The Conversation Project:
<https://theconversationproject.org/>
- Trauma-informed Oregon:
<https://traumainformedoregon.org>
- The Aging and Disability Resource Center:
<https://www.adrcoforegon.org/consumersite/index.php>
- The Dinner Party Host Guidebook:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b1066184611a029fec8f7c4/t/5c8dcc284785d35a3b3fbfae/1552796715171/TD_P_Host+Guidebook.pdf
- Dr. Toni Miles Bereavement Toolkits for residents, families and staff:
<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ALISA/rcs/documents/nh/Examples%20of%20CMP%20Funded%20Projects-%20Updated%202019.pdf>



Ken Price, Jivaroland Frog Cup, 1968



Department of County Human Services



Partnerships to Improve Behavioral Health for
Older Adults and People with Disabilities

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