

CONVERSATION Café

COFFEE SHOPS, FROM THEIR VERY BEGINNING, HAVE NOT ONLY BEEN PLACES THAT SERVE HOT BEVERAGES,

but have always been locations for partaking in social life. Conversation Cafés are open conversations in coffee shops or any other publicly accessed community setting including restaurants, conference rooms, churches or more. The simple format allows a group to feel at ease while providing a space and time to be heard. By posing thoughtful questions and encouraging each other to listen with a real desire to understand, Conversation Cafés can help us to shift from discussion to dialogue.

A BASIC PROCESS:

The following provides a guide to facilitating an actual event. This guide can be adapted to meet your particular needs.

- 1 Begin by convening a group of people. Once everyone is present, welcome them and start with introductions.
- 2 Review the principles of dialogue to ensure participants understand the ingredients of a respectful conversation. You might use the **Principles of Dialogue** handout.
- 3 Outline the steps to Conversation Café set out in 4-7 below.

4 Begin the conversation by going around the group asking each person to comment on the topic. Each person speaks briefly as others listen. Participants must wait until their turn to respond or comment on each other's thoughts. You might introduce a talking object here if necessary.

5 Once you have gone around the table once, go around a second time and invite each person to deepen their previous statements.

6 After the second time through, open up to dialogue - only introducing a talking object if there is domination or lack of focus.

7 To conclude, devote the last 5-10 minutes to a final round where participants take a moment to reflect. You might suggest the following:

Think of yourself when you entered this room. Think of yourself now at the present moment. Has there been any shift in your thinking today as a result of this conversation? If so, you might want to briefly share where this movement has occurred and what has prompted this change for you. If not, please briefly share any benefit you may have received from the dialogue.

PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE

Practice empathy

- Create a space that encourages all to "feel what it's like in someone else's shoes"
- Encourage stories or testimony where applicable

Celebrate diversity

- Include a diverse range of perspectives through design and activities
- Ensure all voices are heard and embolden everyone to participate

Promote curiosity and learning

- Pose thoughtful questions that encourage exploration and self-reflection
- Practice reflective listening to build understand and learning by all

Expose assumptions and suspend judgement

- Explore how personal views are influenced by assumptions based in our past
- Engage in activities that involve "trying on" different perspectives

Put power in its place

- Focus on creating safe space not on controlling the discourse
- Encourage people to come to dialogue as fellow citizens and not representatives of a position
- Discuss openly the ways unequal power operates in your community and invite people of power into that conversation

Resources

- **A Guide to Nurturing Dialogue**, ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/Cannabis-Talks-Series-Nurturing-Community-Dialogue-Guide-2018-en.pdf
- participedia.net/en/methods/conversation-cafes

ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/Cannabis-Talks-Series-Principles-of-Dialogue-2018-en.pdf