



October 16 and 17, 2012
Hockley Valley Resort
Orangeville ON

Bold Leadership to Recharge Our Rural Communities

Tools and techniques for
energizing and mobilizing participation

**MOVING BEYOND OUR FAMILIAR WAYS OF LEADING AND WORKING TOGETHER
THROUGH THE *ART OF HOSTING* (CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER)**

A program of Steps to Leadership—a project by:



Investment provided by:



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

The **Leading Edge Summit** is a program of Steps to Leadership—a collaborative project of the Rural Ontario Institute and 4-H Ontario.

Investment in this project was provided by
Agriculture and Agri-food Canada's Adaptation Programming
and administered by the Agricultural Adaptation Council.

For more information about Steps to Leadership and its
programs and resources please visit
www.stepstoleadership.ca.

The **Leading Edge Summit** would not have been possible without the
help of our amazing planning and hosting teams:

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Agenda In-Brief

Tuesday October 16, 2012

ARRIVAL

9:00 am Registration

9:30 am Session Start

12:30 pm Lunch

DEEPENING IN

1:30 pm Session Start

5:00 pm Break and Hotel Check-in

6:00 pm Dinner

7:30 pm Celebration

On Tuesday we expect to*:

- *Meet and network with each other*
- *Create a shared sense of purpose and possibility as rural leaders*
- *Explore questions that matter beyond the scope of typical meetings*
- *Begin to explore the application of participative methodologies to our responsibilities/ organizations/ projects*

Wednesday October 17, 2012

ROLLING UP OUR SLEEVES

9:00 am Session Start

12:30 pm Lunch

TAKING IT HOME

1:30 pm Session Start

4:30 pm Closing Circle

5:00 pm Good-bye

On Wednesday we expect to*:

- *Continue to explore the application of participative methodologies to our responsibilities/ organizations/ projects*
- *Learn and be coached on additional frameworks*
- *Create clear and personal next steps for our work in support of rural Ontario*

* The agenda will also be flexible because we expect that the wisdom of the group will help to inform what we engage in.

Need

Ontario's rural and agricultural organizations and communities are under pressure – we are all trying to do more with less to address increasingly complex challenges.

This pressure also brings with it an opportunity for real change, and *real change calls for a new kind of leadership*.

We all have the opportunity to be **courageous, imaginative leaders** with skills to inspire and engage others to create a new future together.

Purpose

We are gathering together to explore how to move beyond our familiar ways of leading and working together to energize and mobilize participation through the *Art of Hosting*.

About this Workbook

The insights and models presented in this workbook build on the experiences harvested in an international network of practitioners who share a common practice based on what is known as The Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter (AoH). AoH is both a network of practitioners and a training program focusing on the transition from strategic conversations to wise action and systematic change.

This workbook is intended to be a personal reference journal, to help you remember, focus and deepen your learning. It shares the basic assumption and understanding of the Art of Hosting practice. It includes several tools and practices that the community of practitioners has found simple and helpful. They are for you to use, improve and share.

A special thanks to teams around the world who share their workbooks and experiences with the online AoH community. In particular, the workbook for the Hosting Our Evolution workshop in Pembroke (November 2011), compiled by Kathleen Connelly, Jane Lindsay, Jean Ogilvie and Tenneson Woolf become the model and very valuable resource for the compilation of this workbook. Additional resources have been included from the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies workbook (September 2012). This current edition has been edited by the Summit hosting team - Tenneson Woolf, Jean Ogilvie, Erika Bailey and Alicia Evans

The Hosting Team



Tenneson Woolf

I am a facilitator. I design and lead meetings. To get people interacting with each other; learning together, building relationships, and focused on projects. From strategic planning for boards to large conference design. Living systems, self-organization, and emergence inspire my work. It's all participative. Helps us get to the heart of it.

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Jean Ogilvie

I support leaders, teams and organizations to thrive. With over twenty years experience, I work one on one with people as a coach, with teams wanting to break through to a new level of functioning and with whole systems to design and facilitate processes that enliven and enrich the organizations that people create together. I work on behalf of organizations meeting the challenges and opportunities that face them, producing excellent results, while at the same time cultivating a creative and nourishing culture.



Erika Lee Bailey

I am a facilitator, Human Systems Consultant and Chief Change Artist at Erika Lee Bailey and Associates (www.elbailey.ca). I have over a decade of experience working with groups as a trainer, instructional designer, facilitator, and consultant. I have designed and delivered programs, interventions and large-scale problem solving in complex and adaptive organizations across multiple sectors. My expertise includes front-line change and innovation processes, experiential learning, and developmental innovation. I practice Change Artistry; helping people toward their desirable futures through innovation, discovery, and the development of meaningful relationships.

Why Collaborative Leadership and the Art of Hosting?

New Solutions are Needed - Whether in corporations, government, education, non-profits, communities or families, collaborative leadership is built on the assumption and experience that an increasing complexity in the problems we face compels us to find new solutions for the common good. These solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned if they are co-created by the stakeholders.

New Solutions Grow Between Chaos and Order - If we want to innovate, we have to be willing to let go of what we know and step into not knowing. In nature all innovation happens at the edge of chaos, or in the space between chaos and order (the chaordic path). It is in the chaordic space that new connections are created and new possibilities emerge. The way to any major change or transformation will go through chaos into new order.

Conversations Matter - It is common sense to bring more people together in conversation. It is the way we have done it in generations past, gathering around fires and sitting in circles. Conversation is the way we think and make meaning together. It is the way we build strong relationships that invite real collaboration.

Meaningful Conversations Lead to Wise Actions - Human beings who are involved and invited to work together only pay attention to that which is meaningful to them. Conversations that surface a shared clarity on issues of importance foster ownership and responsibility when ideas and solutions must be put into action—actions that come out of collective clarity are sustainable.

Organizations are Living Systems - When human beings join together in an enterprise or organization, they have more in common with a living system than with a machine. Living systems are intelligent and capable of self organizing their own unique solutions. The way one “leads” a living system is radically different from operating a machine.

“Leadership in complexity requires different skills than traditional models of leadership. It requires us to think of leadership as inquiry, and this in turn means that we need to think much more critically about the kinds of questions that we ask. It may not be the answers that need changing, but the questions.”

- Brenda Zimmerman

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Core Patterns

Engaging Our Limiting Beliefs

Caitlin Frost

As human beings, facilitators, leaders, partners, and participants in work, community, relationship, change and life - we show up in the world, and experience the world through a filter made up of our personal and cultural beliefs, stories, assumptions and thoughts. Peter Block talks about it as our 'context' - "the set of beliefs, at times ones that we are unaware of, that dictate how we think, how we frame the world, what we pay attention to, and consequently how we behave."

Identifying and inquiring into our stressful and limiting beliefs is powerful as a practice of 'self hosting' - both to enable our own authentic participation and to deepen our ability to host others from a clear place.

Identifying and inquiring more deeply our limiting beliefs allows us to:

- hear and see other people more clearly;
- access our creativity, intelligence and wise action;
- work creatively and authentically with a wide range of people;
- create a shift in understanding our context that allows new ways of learning;
- build a future that is not based on the past;
- see more options;
- be fearless and available to the moment;
- access our energy;
- hold fearless space and possibility for groups and clients working through chaos, fear and complexity;
- experience peace;
- engage with our attachment to outcome.

How else could this freedom serve our work and our lives?

Limiting Beliefs and Stories:

Limiting stories are personal or communal versions of the past experienced as fact. They are stories about the conclusions we draw from events that happened to us which we use to define ourselves and others, and to predict our future. They are stories that induce fear, separation and blame. (Peter Block) They are often so much a part of our experience of life that we don't even know they are there. We experience them as 'reality'. When we are stuck - we tell stories of fear and fault as if we can keep ourselves safe by being afraid; as if by assigning blame we can somehow stop something from happening again. When we are angry

and afraid, our availability to creative thought, possibility, wise action and human connection are noticeably limited. If we pay attention, we can often feel our minds and hearts closing when a limiting belief or thought arises.

Not all stories and beliefs are limiting. Many serve us. Peter Block says stories that are useful to us are the ones that are metaphors, signposts, parables and inspiration for the fullest expression of our humanity. They may be mythic stories or personal stories about our work or daily life. Stories that serve us are not experienced as frightening or stressful when they are held in a clear way - they inspire us, encourage and energize us, connect us with others, hold our minds and hearts open and help us find our voice. It is not the belief itself that limits us, but how we experience it. By developing a deeper sense of how our beliefs and stories function, we are more able to identify our beliefs and to discern when they are limiting us.

The existence of limiting beliefs and thoughts is good news. It means that reality, as we experience it when we are stressed or angry or stuck, is more malleable than it often feels. It means that there is something we can work with that can change our experience of what is possible. It means that we don't need to wait for other people for things to change.

Identifying Limiting Beliefs and Stories:

*To create a new story,
first we need to come to terms with the current one.
This begins by naming it.*
Peter Block

Many of our limiting beliefs and stories are so much part of our experience that we do not see them as beliefs that are separate from reality or what else is possible. Many of these beliefs and stories have been with us for as long as we can remember; they are echoed through our workplace, our families and our culture. Our emotional responses as well as our friends and coworkers will often agree with us that they are true. Whether they are 'true' or not is not the most important factor in freeing ourselves and our minds from their limiting effect. What is most important is having an awareness that they exist; what they are; and a deeper understanding of how they function in our lives.

We also limit ourselves when we argue with reality. When something is happening and we tell the story that it shouldn't be happening we are stuck in a loop. "He should understand me." "They shouldn't disrupt the process." It is not that we condone any particular actions or conditions, it is just that war with reality generally leaves us limited in our ability to respond creatively or compassionately.

The first step in a healthy relationship with our limiting beliefs is identifying them. Simple and powerful questions can help us as individuals and groups to identify our beliefs and stories so

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that we can hold them with awareness and engage with them in a process of inquiry that will allow some shift to take place. Specific questions can be crafted to invite out beliefs and stories where there is a sense of stress, fear or blockage. On an individual basis it can also be as basic as noticing a feeling of closing down and asking oneself 'what am I thinking or believing' that triggers that reaction or emotion.

When identifying limiting beliefs with the intention of inquiry, it is not the concepts themselves that are necessary limiting, but our response to them. Limiting beliefs can sometimes sound benign or even kind ("people should treat each other with respect.") It is helpful to look for short, direct statements that sound like fact and come directly from our minds when we are feeling stuck, angry, afraid, sad or closed. It is not necessary to believe a thought all the time for it to limit us. We may be able to reason our way out of it in the moment, only to find it back again under duress. A process of deeper inquiry into the nature of each of our limiting beliefs changes our relationship to them and opens space for our goodness, clarity and wisdom to arise.

Questions (and open statements) can be crafted to focus on particular areas where a block is experienced. The intention is to stimulate short clear belief statements - often a list will flow. Longer responses can be broken down into individual belief statements to work with.

Here are some examples:

- What is stopping me from having or inviting an important conversation in my work or life? What am I afraid will happen?
- What is stopping me from doing this work in my full integrity?
- What is stopping me from stepping into the next level of my leadership in my work or in my life?
- What am I unwilling to hear?
- This won't work because...

on attachment to outcome:

- Find the belief statement of what "needs to happen".
- Find the fear belief of "what will happen if the desired outcome does not occur."
- Identify an outcome that you didn't want and list statements of what that means (to you, to others, for what is possible.)

in my working relationships:

- who can't I work with and why?
- what advice to I have for 'them' (my clients, staff, boss, colleagues, leaders)
- What belief/thought is keeping me from connecting with ____ (someone specific) right now? (He/she should/shouldn't.... he/she is.... he/she always...)

What are some other questions that can uncover limiting beliefs in my work/life?

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Fearlessness: Stepping Fully Into Our Lives, Ourselves, Our Work and Our Relationships

*There is no greater illusion than fear.
No greater wrong than preparing to defend yourself.
No greater misfortune than having an enemy.
Whoever can see through all fear will always be safe.*
Tao te Ching

*This is not the time to live in fear
of who we are or how powerful we are.*
Tim Merry

Fear is war embodied. Fearlessness is peace.

Fear is a very intense experience. It is also one of most powerful human emotions that can lead to shutting down our open minds - often with great speed and force. There is some biological explanation of this "fight or flight" response AND there is often great benefit in not reverting to this shut down of our creativity, connection, calm and broader intelligence. Cultivating a deeper understanding of our fearful thoughts and beliefs can allow us to stay in our clarity and power and to see options and consider ideas and actions that are not available to our closed and frightened minds. As fearless hosts and leaders, we can invite others into their own clarity and intelligence in times of chaos, discomfort and fear and hold open authentic space for wise action and peace.

A common underlying belief is often that our fear is keeping us safe, honest and motivated, so inquiry into a fearful belief can be a courageous act in itself. You are invited to test this belief about the usefulness of fear by looking deeply at how each fear belief really functions in your life, your work, and your relationships. In looking closer at our fearful thoughts and beliefs, it is helpful to remember that the process of inquiry is not asking us to let go of anything. It is not suggesting or condoning anything - it is simply an invitation to ourselves to take a closer look at what we hold in our minds and how that serves or doesn't serve. When we hold our beliefs in a tight grip it is very difficult to maintain an open mind, let alone an open heart. When we loosen our grip on our beliefs and come to know them, we are able to be in relationship to them without fear - what is needed to serve us peacefully remains, what hinders us loses its grip in the knowing.

Connecting with Others Authentically

*It's not our differences that divide us.
It's our judgements about each other that do.*
Margaret Wheatley

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Defence is the first act of war.

Byron Katie

Working with our limiting beliefs enables us to host a level of consciousness in ourselves where we can connect with others in an authentic way. In order to be available to host and participate in authentic co-creation and collaboration, it is important that we have the ability to hold our minds and hearts open to the diversity of the world we will meet in this work. And of course to be able to hold our minds and hearts open to ourselves. Prejudice, blame and fear make it difficult to hear and see each other fully, let alone create a new future together.

- What do I believe about others that limits my ability to connect and work with them?
- What do I dislike or fear about people?
- He/she/they are....
- He/she/they should or shouldn't....
- He/she/they always...

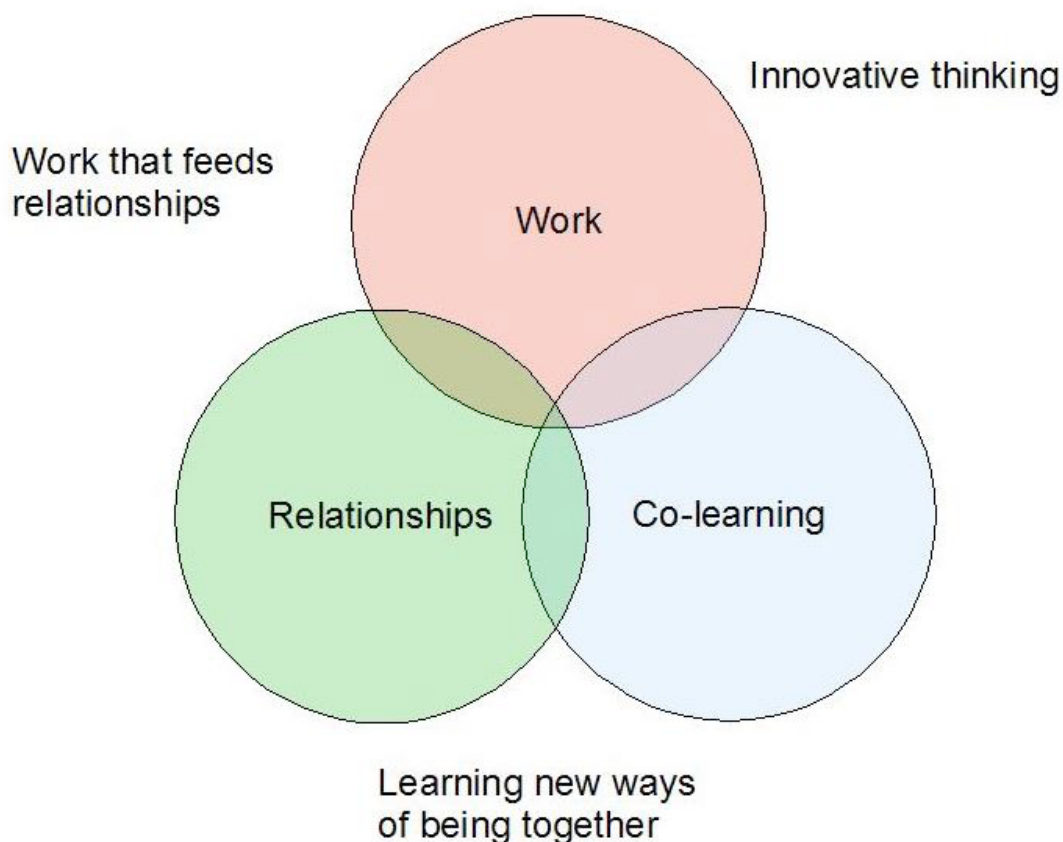
*The Master doesn't see saints as saints or sinners as sinners;
they're just people who are suffering or not;
believing their thoughts or not.*

Byron Katie

Three Conditions for Deeper Conversation

Chris Corrigan

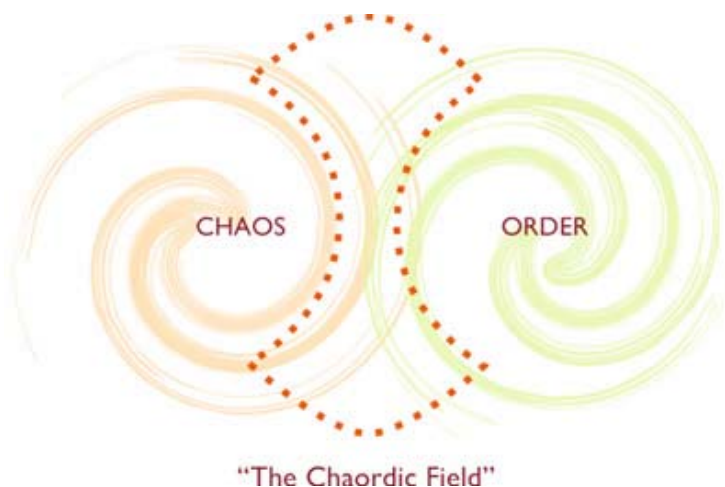
When we sense the need to call a deeper, more meaningful conversation we are looking for something that moves beyond simply a meeting to do work. The most meaningful and powerful conversations combine good work with deeper relationships and a crackling learning environment. When the need arises for these kinds of gatherings, pay attention to processes that support all three of these domains. There is an art to hosting all three at once, and the benefits from doing so well include innovative thinking, work that feeds relationships and learning new ways to be together. These are also conditions under which a deeper community of practice may emerge, giving long life to excellent results. When it's time to host powerful conversations, seek to balance these three.



The Chaordic Path

Chaos-Order-Control are different states of being and experiencing. We tend to feel safest in the state of order, or for some people, in control. Being out of control is scary if we are looking for predictability. If we have a mechanistic view of organizations, our tendency will be to stay within the realms of order and control, where things are predictable and stable—and where we produce status quo or “more of the same” - which in some cases is exactly what is needed.

The world and times we live in are, however, neither predictable nor stable and call for more flexibility as “more of the same” solutions are not meeting the challenges. If we are looking for innovative, new solutions, we will find them in a place between chaos and order—the chaordic path.



The chaordic path is actually the story of our natural world—form arises out of nonlinear, complex, diverse systems. “At the edge of chaos” is where life innovates—where things are not hard wired, but are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos.

In nature, so too in organizations, the path between Chaos and Order leads us to the new—to collective learning and real-time innovation. Instead of relying on controlling every detail in our organizations or communities from the top down, many leaders today see the need to access the collective intelligence and collective wisdom of everyone, which can be, at times, a “messy” process until we reach new insight and clarity.

To lead our organization on the chaordic path, we need “chaordic confidence”, to have the courage to stay in the dance of order and chaos long enough to support generative emergence that allows the new, collective intelligence and wise action processes to occur.

As we tread the line between chaos and order, individually and collectively, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. It is in the phase of not knowing, before we reach new clarity, that the temptation to rush for certainty or grab for control is strongest. We are all called to walk this new path with open minds and some confidence if we want to reach something wholly new.

In this space of emergence, we leave our collective encounters with something that not one of us individually brought into the room.

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The art is to stay in the fine balance between chaos and order. Straying too far to either side is counterproductive. On the far side of chaos is chamos, or destructive chaos, where everything disintegrates and dies. On the far side of order is stifling control, where there is no movement, which eventually means death. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion, the very opposite of chaordic confidence. Staying on the chaordic path is where the balance is and where life thrives.

Chaos/Order is the Place for Leadership

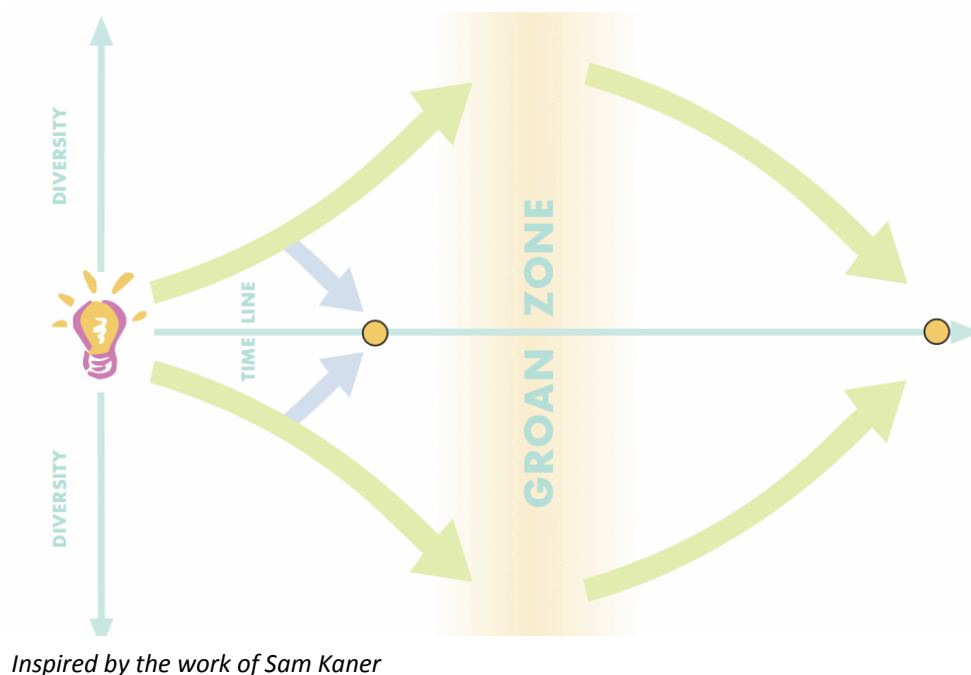
The practice of leadership resides in the place between chaos and order. When facing new challenges that cannot be met with the same way we are currently working, we need to learn new ways of operating. It is during these times of uncertainty and increased complexity where results cannot be predicted that leaders need to invite others to share diverse knowledge to discover new purpose and strategy and decide the way forward.

Order/Control is the Place for Management

The practice of management lies between order and control, where activities need to be maintained and executed routinely so that a particular standard results. It is the place where “more of the same” is required (Eg. Landing an airplane safely, operating on a patient, etc.). Therefore, it is where predictability is called for and where procedures and standards are clearly defined and adhered to.

Divergence and Convergence

This model is a basic pattern of learning. All groups who are trying to do something new go through the three zones of this model. In the divergence zone, people explore ideas, and become aware of diversity and become aware of possibilities. In this zone the group needs to be open and share ideas.

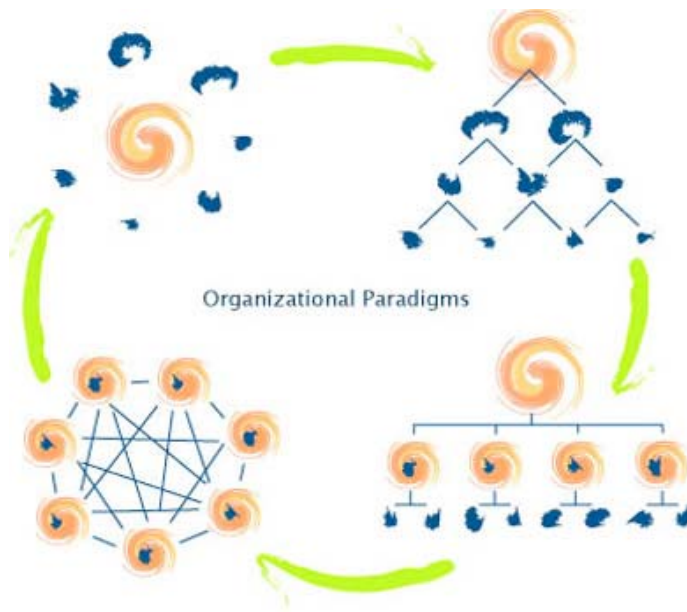


In the groan zone, new ideas emerge, ideas that seem not to be the property of anyone in particular but rather the groups as a whole. This zone is called the groan zone, because individuals and groups enter a period of struggle as they try to integrate what they are learning. In this zone groups need strong relationships in order rely on one another to get through the struggle. Good process matters here.

In the convergence zone, excitement and clarity builds and decisions become clear. Groups need processes that take them to meaning making, clarity and decision making for sustainable results.

This is a map of the journey learning groups take. When you use this map to design processes, you will find yourself becoming more aware of what is needed in any given time. When the group hits the groan zone you will know it and you can shift your focus to supporting the relationships. Sharing this map with a group before a powerful conversation helps participants to co-own the journey together, and not be surprised by the dynamics that arise.

Organizing Patterns—4 Organizational Paradigms



Throughout human history the living system of human organization has created many ways of organizing itself to get work done. We notice that these ways of working together can be captured within four organizational paradigms. Each of these paradigms is alive and familiar to us, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. When we are designing process, projects and organizations, it is worth paying attention to the different roles of these paradigms so that they can be used wisely.

Circle – Our oldest organizational form.

In a circle, people come together equally to provide a multiplicity of perspectives on something. Circles are powerful for reflection, for harnessing collective insight and for making decisions. To work, people in circles need to have equal access to information, power and responsibility.

Hierarchy (the triangle) – Hierarchy is another ancient form. When things need to get done and someone has more responsibility than others, hierarchy is an efficient way to channel action. In a small and dynamic hierarchy, a leader is assisted by helpers. The helpers don't need to have the same information as the leader in order to do the work.

Bureaucracy – Despite its bad rap, the gift of the bureaucracy is that it can bring stability and efficient ways of distributing resources. Bureaucracies that work well act like irrigation systems, ensuring that all parts of an organization are “watered” and that resources don't flow too fast. To slow down the flow, bureaucracies retain accountabilities from the bottom to the top in exchange for a flow of resources from the top down. This form, used wisely, is a brilliant adaptation of the way energy flows in a natural system.

Network – Networks are formed by actors who actively choose to be in relationships with others. Actors are autonomous and only engage in relationships that mutually serve partners. Networks are incredibly fast ways to organize complexity. In nature the network is the prevalent form of sustainability. Increasingly, human networks are becoming the prevalent form of organizing on the planet led and abetted by the internet. Networks thrive when sharing and reciprocity is present. Huge amounts of work can get done very efficiently by networks, because actors can find exactly the partners they need for any given time.

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Theory U

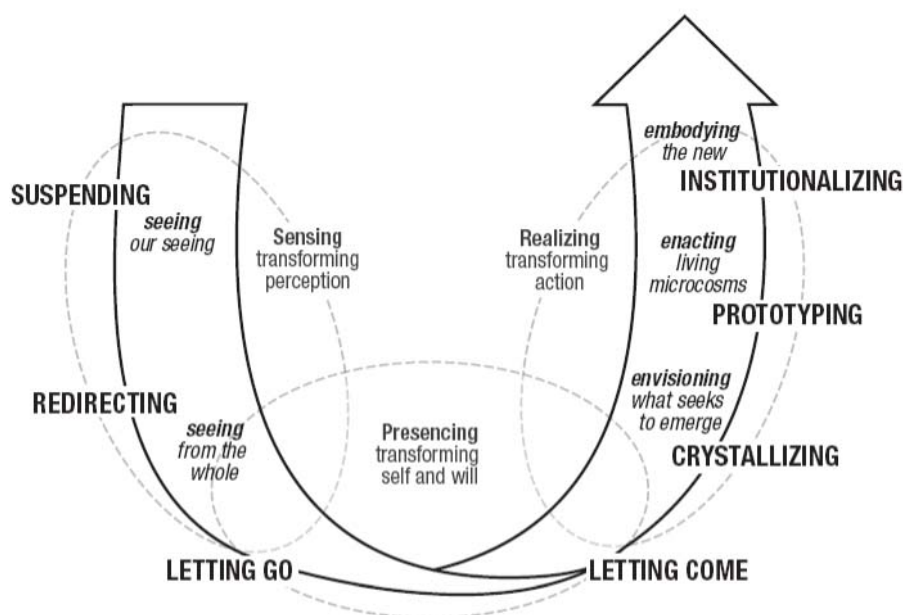
www.ottoscharmer.com; www.presencing.org; www.theoryu.com

“Presencing” is bringing into presence, and into the present, your highest potential and the future that is seeking to emerge. Your highest future possibility is related to your own highest intention ... it’s being an instrument of life itself, to accomplish, in a sense, what life wishes for me to accomplish.

Theory U explores a whole new territory of scientific research and personal leadership. By moving through the “U” we learn to connect to our originating Self. We travel down the left side of the “U” to find ourselves in the realm of presencing, where we learn to sense the future that is seeking to emerge. At that level of operating, we experience the opening of our minds, our hearts and our wills. Yes, this is an intellectual journey, but it’s one that is grounded in real life experience and shared practices. On this journey of sensing, presencing and realizing, we learn new ways of being—ways crucial for each of us at this chaotic time.

Fundamental problems, as Einstein once noted, cannot be solved at the same level of thought that created them. Learning to pay attention to our attention and to illuminate the blind spot can be the key leverage point to bring forth the profound systemic changes in business, society and in science so needed now.

Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future



2 Loops of Systems Change

The world doesn't change when networks of relationships form among people who share a common cause and vision of what's possible. This is good news for those of us intent on creating a positive future. Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections. We don't need to convince the large numbers of people to change; instead, we need to connect with kindred spirits. Through these relationships, we will develop the new knowledge, practices, courage and commitment that lead to broad-based change.

Systems Have Life Cycles

They have a beginning, middle and end. Many of our modern systems seem to be failing to sustain themselves in the complexity of our times.

In Living Systems, Change Happens Through Emergence

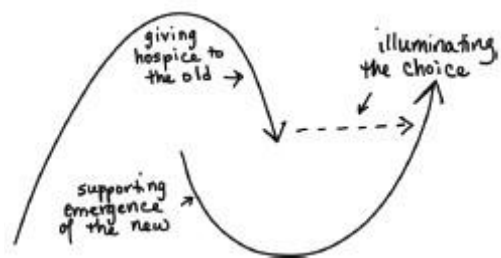
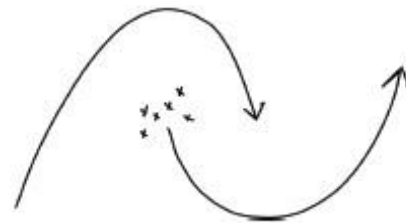
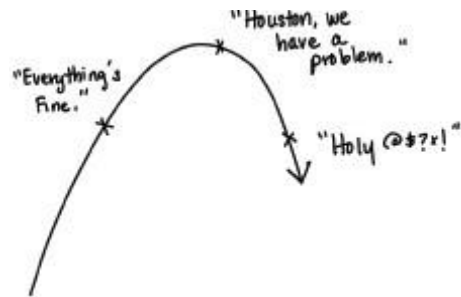
In nature, change never happens as a result of top-down, pre-conceived strategic plans, or from the mandate of any single individual or boss. Change begins as local actions spring up simultaneously in many different areas. If these changes remain disconnected, nothing happens beyond each locale. However, when they become connected, local actions can emerge as a powerful systems with influence at a more global or comprehensive level. (Global here means a larger scale, not necessarily the entire planet.)

Working Intentionally with Emergence

When separate, local efforts connect with each other as networks, then strengthen as communities of practice, suddenly and surprisingly a new system emerges at a greater level of scale. This system of influence possesses qualities and capacities that were unknown in the individuals.

Lifecycle of Emergence

- Networks—commitment to self, fluid membership, fluid roles
- Communities of Practice—commitment to advance field of practice, focus on creation and dissemination of knowledge, distinct roles
- Systems of Influence—pioneering efforts suddenly become the norm



Living Systems: Organizing Life

The tools and processes covered in this workbook are chosen specifically to work with a living systems view of organization. This view sees human systems as natural and evolving, and runs somewhat contrary to the view that groups are machines. Working with living systems is different from seeing organizations and groups as machines. Here are some ways in which living systems are unique.

- A living system only accepts its own solutions (we only support those things we are a part of creating)
- A living system only pays attention to that which is meaningful to it (here and now)
- In nature a living system participates in the development of its neighbour (an isolated system is doomed)
- Nature and all of nature, including ourselves is in constant change (without 'change management')
- Nature seeks diversity – new relations open up to new possibilities (not survival of the fittest)
- 'Tinkering' opens up to what is possible here and now – nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions
- A living system cannot be steered or controlled – they can only be teased, nudged, titillated
- A system changes (identity) when its perception of itself changes
- All the answers do not exist 'out there' – we must (sometimes) experiment to find out what works
- Who we are together is always different and more than who we are alone (possibility of emergence)
- We (human beings) are capable of self-organizing – given the right conditions
- Self-organization shifts to a higher order

Core Processes

The following pages will give a short introduction to some of the core methodologies that are good practice in participatory leadership. They are designed to engage a group of people (large or small) in strategic conversations where our collective wisdom and intelligence can be engaged in service to finding the best solutions for a common purpose

There are some **basic principles or qualities** that are common to all these methodologies:

- They offer a **simple structure** that helps to engage small or large groups in conversations that can lead to results
- They each their **special advantages and limitations**
- They are usually **based on dialogue**, with **intentional speaking** (speaking when you really have something to say) and **attentive listening** (listening to understand) as basic practices, allowing us to go on an exploration and discovery together, rather than trying to convince each other of our own present truths
- **Suspending assumptions** is a basic practice. It allows us to listen without bias (or with less bias) and to examine our own present truths
- **Circle is the basic organizational form**, whether used as the only form (eg. Circle practice) or used as many smaller conversation circles, woven into a bigger conversation (eg. World Café, Open Space)
- Meeting in circle is a **meeting of equals**. Generally all these methodologies inspire peer-to-peer discovery and learning
- **Inquiry or powerful questions** are a driving force. Answers tend to close a conversation while inquiry keeps the conversation going deeper
- The purpose of all this is to “think well together”, that is to **engage the collective intelligence** for better solutions
- **Facilitating** these engagements or conversations is more like stewarding or “**hosting**”, allowing the solutions to emerge from the wisdom in the middle
- There are a number of conditions that need to be in place for engagement to work well. Any engagement or strategic conversation needs to be **based in a real need** and has to have a clear purpose. Any “givens” or boundary conditions need to be clear ahead of time. You may also have defined success criteria or have an idea of the outcome even if the concrete solutions will emerge from the conversations

The Four-Fold Practice

There are four basic practices that are key to participatory leadership and the Art of Hosting. Being truly present, engaging skillfully in conversations, being a good host of conversations and engaging with others in co-creation are all practices or skills that are easily understood, but it takes a continuous practice to hone these skills.



1. To Be Present (Pre-Sensing)

Being present means to show-up, to not have distraction, to be prepared, to be clear about the need and to understand what your personal contribution can be. It allows you to check in with yourself and develop the personal practice of curiosity about the outcomes of any gathering. Presence means making space to devote a dedicated time to work with others. If you are distracted, called out or otherwise located in many different places, you cannot be present in one. For meetings to have deep results, every person in the room should be fully present.

Being present also means being aware of one's environment, other people, impacts on you and how you impact others.

Collectively, it is good practice to become present together as a meeting begins, be it through a welcome, a good framing, a process of "checking-in" to the subject matter or task at hand by hearing everyone's voice in the matter or even taking a moment of silence.

Invite a collective slowing down so that all participants in a meeting can be present together.

2. Practice Conversations (Participating)

Conversation is an art, it is not just talk. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in the service of the whole. Curiosity and judgment do not live well together in the same space. If we are judging what we are hearing, we cannot be curious about the outcome, and if we have called a meeting because we are uncertain of the way forward, being open is a key skill and capacity. Only by practicing skillful conversation can we find our best practice together.

If we practice conversation mindfully, we might slow down meetings so that wisdom and clarity can work quickly. When we talk mindlessly, we neither hear each other nor do we allow space for the clarity to arise. The art of conversation is the art of slowing down to speed up.

3. Hosting Conversations (Contributing)

Hosting conversations is an act of leadership and means taking responsibility for creating and holding the “container” in which a group of people can do their best work together.

You can create this container using the eight helpers (see the Design section of this book) as starting points, and although you can also do this in the moment, the more prepared you are the better. The best preparation is being fully present.

The bare minimum to do is to discern the need, get clear on the purpose of the meeting, prepare a good, powerful question to initiate the conversation, and know how you will harvest and what will be done with that harvest to ensure that results are sustainable and the effort was worth it.

Hosting conversations takes courage, and it takes a bit of certainty and faith in your people. We sometimes give short shrift to conversational spaces because of the fear we experience in stepping up to host. It is however, a gift to host a group, and it is a gift to be hosted well.

4. Community of Practitioners (Co-Creating)

The fourth practice is about showing up in a conversation without being a spectator, and contributing to the collective effort to sustain results. The best conversations arise when we listen for what is in the middle between us—what is arising as a result of our collaboration. It is not about the balancing of individual agendas; it is about finding out what is new, in particular collectively. And when that is discovered, work unfolds beautifully as everyone is clear about what they can contribute to the work. In a truly co-creative process, it becomes irrelevant who said or contributed what—the gift is in the synergy and inspiration when we build on each other’s knowledge and the whole becomes much bigger than the sum of the parts.

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This is how results become sustainable over time—they fall into the network of relationships that arise from a good conversation, from friends working together. The collaborative field can produce unexpected and surprising results, especially in complex situations where multi-layered challenges need to be met simultaneously.

From a Learner to a Community that Learns

As we learn to be truly present and engage in conversations that really matter, we become learners. As learners, many doors are open to us.

As we begin to host conversation and connect with other hosts or practitioners, we become a community of learners or practitioners. As a community, we own a much bigger capacity than as individual learners.

As a community of individual practitioners or learners becomes “a community that learns” - where we really enter the collective intelligence—we multiply our capacity and enter the field of emergence.

“You can have a group of individually intelligent people—but until that group knows what it knows together—the group as a group is not intelligent.”

- inspired by Peter Senge

Circle Practice

Circle, is one ancient form of gathering human beings into respectful conversations. It was a form to listen, to be wise, to unite communities, to make decisions. In some cultures, this tradition remains intact. In many others, it has been forgotten. Peer Spirit Circle is also a modern methodology that calls on this tradition and helps people gather in conversations that fulfill their potential for dialogue, replenishment and wisdom-based change.

What is Circle Good For?

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for “checking in” and “checking out”, or a way of making decisions together, particularly for decisions based on consensus.

Principles of Circle:

- Rotate leadership
- Take responsibility
- Have a higher purpose that you gather around

Practice of Circle:

- Speak with intention – focus on what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
- Listen with attention – respect the learning process and experience of all members of the group
- Tend to the well-being of the group – remain aware of what the group needs to hold its focus

Four Agreements of Circle

- Listen without judgment
- Offer what you can; ask for what you need
- Silence is also part of the conversation
- Respect confidences

Beginnings

- Invoke presence (welcome, poem, mediation, silence)
- Check-in (even a word or two from each in the group that supports their full attention)
- Have a good question (speak the purpose with clarity and call people to it)

Middles

- Use a listening tool (talking piece, listening piece)
- Harvest (make visible what has occurred, including the energy and relationships)
- Reflect

Ends

- Check-out (even a word or two on what just happened, what is different now)
- Close the space (closing thought or observation)
- Release people from this intense listening and learning back to a less formal social space



Appreciative Inquiry

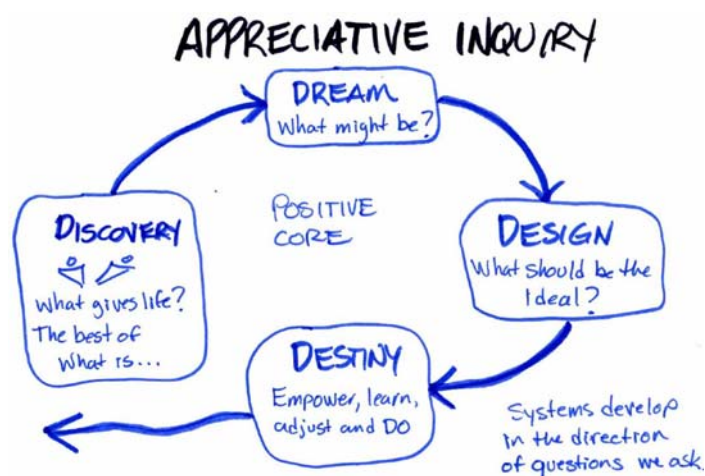
Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for intentional change that identifies the best of 'what is' to pursue dreams and possibilities of 'what could be; a cooperative search for strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system that hold potential for inspired, positive change. (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987)

Assumptions

- In every community something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment – there is more than one reality
- The act of asking questions influences the community in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past
- If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

What is Appreciate Inquiry Really Good For?

Appreciative inquiry is useful when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process from a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in "what is" towards "what could be". Appreciative inquiry can be used with individuals, partners, small groups or large organizations.



Source: Cooperrider et.al

Problem Solving

Needs identification of the problem
Analysis of causes
Analysis of possible solutions
An organization is a problem to be solved

vs.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciating and valuing the best of "what is"
Envisioning "what might be"
Dialoguing "what should be"/Innovating "what will be"
An organization is a mystery to be embraced

General Flow of an Appreciative Inquiry Process

DEFINITION: Surfacing the focus for inquiring appreciatively

DISCOVERY: Identifying the organizational processes that work well

DREAM: Envisioning processes that would work well in the future

DESIGN: Planning and prioritizing those processes

DESTINY/DELIVERY: Implementing the proposed design

The basic idea is to build organizations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.

At the start is a positive topic choice—how we ask even the first question contains the seeds of change we are looking to enact.

Appreciative inquiry can also be used as a way of opening a meeting or conversation by identifying what already works. What do you value most about your self/work/organization?

For more information: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

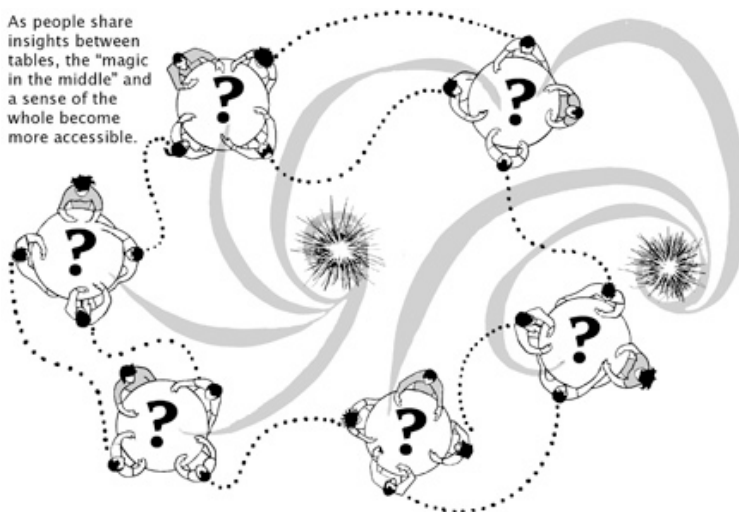
The World Café

www.theworldcafe.com

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor...as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among 'table conversations' at the World Café.

(From The World Café Resource Guide)

As people share insights between tables, the "magic in the middle" and a sense of the whole become more accessible.



Assumptions of a World Café

- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Collective insight evolves from honouring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions.
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways.

What is a World Café Good for?

World Café is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people. The café format is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes—information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection, exploration, and action planning. When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for both moving through the rounds of questions (likely to take longer than you think) and some type of whole-group harvest.

General Flow of a World Café

- Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters
- Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually of 20-30 minutes each—have some good questions
- Ask one person to stay at the table as a 'host' and invite the other table members to move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights
- Ask the table host to share key insights, questions and ideas briefly with new table members, then let folks move through the rounds of questions
- After you've moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations

Operating Principles of a World Café

- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage each person's contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Make collective knowledge visible

Materials Needed:

- Small tables (60 cm wide) preferably round
- Chairs for participants and presenters
- Tablecloths
- Flip chart paper or paper placemats for covering the tables
- Markers
- Flip chart or large paper for harvesting collective knowledge or insights
- Posters/table tents showing the Café Etiquette
- Materials for Harvesting

*"How can we enhance our capacity to talk and think more deeply together
about the critical issues facing our communities,
our organisations, our nations and our planet?"*

*How can we access the mutual intelligence and wisdom
we need to create innovative paths forward?"*
- Juanita Brown & David Isaacs

Open Space Technology

The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through. Typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and truly inviting organizations to thrive in times of swirling change.

What is Open Space Good For?

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context including strategic direction setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

Open Space Technology is an excellent meeting format for any situation in which there is:

- A real issue of concern
- Diversity of players
- Complexity of elements
- Presence of passion (including conflict)
- A need for a quick decision

General Flow of an Open Space Meeting

- The group convenes in a circle and is welcomed by a sponsor
- The facilitator provides an overview of the process and explains how it works. The facilitator invites people with issues of concern to come into the circle, write the issue on a piece of paper and announce it to the group
- These people are “conveners”. Each convener places his or her paper on the wall and chooses a time and place to meet. This process continues until there are no more agenda items
- The group then breaks up and heads to the agenda wall, by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in
- Dialogue sessions convene for the rest of the meeting. Recorders (determined by each group) capture the important points and post the reports on the news wall. All of these reports will be harvested in some way and returned to the larger group
- Following the closing or a break, the group might move into “convergence”, a process that takes the issues that have been discussed and attaches action plans to them to “get them out of the room”
- The group then finishes the meeting with a closing circle where people are invited to share comments, insights and commitments arising from the process

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Open Space operates under four principles and one law. These work to create a powerful event motivated by the passion and bounded by the responsibility of the participants.

Principles of Open Space

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened
- When it starts is the right time
- When it's over it's over

The Law of Two Feet

If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere where you can.

Materials Needed:

- Circle of chairs for participants
- Letter or numbers around the room to indicate meeting locations
- A blank wall that will become the agenda
- A news wall for recording and posting the results of the dialogue sessions
- Breakout spaces for meetings
- Paper on which to write session topics/questions
- Markers/pencils/pens
- Posters of the principles and law of two feet
- Materials for harvest

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Pro Action Café

The Pro Action Café is a space for creative and action oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their call, project, ideas, questions or whatever they feel called by and need help to make happen.

The concept of Pro Action Café is a blend of World Café and Open Space technologies. It was first conceived by Rainer von Leoprechting and Ria Baeck in Brussels/Belgium.

What is Pro Action Café Good For?

As a conversational process, the Pro Action Café is a collective, innovative methodology for hosting conversations about calls, questions and projects that matter to the people that attend.

These conversations link and build on each other as people move between café tables, cross pollinate ideas, and offer each other new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, organization or community.

As a process, the Pro Action Café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of good work. Pro Action Café can be used with a network of people and/or as a methodology for a specific group/organization/community to engage in creative and inspirational conversation leading to wiser and more collectively informed actions.

General Flow of a Pro Action Café

A quick check in circle to connect to the purpose of the session and with each other. If check in has already taken place as part of a longer process go straight to building the agenda. You need 2.5 to 3 hours for a good Pro Action Café. Invite participants to step forward with their call and in that way they ask the community for the help they need to move their project to action. People with a call/project stand up, speak it and write it on the agenda that corresponds to a numbered café table.



The number of callers with projects that can be accommodated is determined by counting the number of participants and dividing by 4 (therefore if you have 40 participants you can have a maximum of 10 callers with projects). The principle is first come first served. If you have less callers, add chairs to café tables but no more than 5 at each table. During this process each contributing participant (those who did not step forward) get to contribute/support up to 3 of the different calls/projects.

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When the agenda has been created, invite the callers to go to their numbered café tables. There will be 3 rounds of conversation in café style of 20 to 30 minutes each, guided by a few generic questions to help deepen and focus the conversations:

ROUND 1:

What is the quest behind the call/question/project?

(to deepen the need and purpose of the call)

ROUND 2:

What is missing?

(when the quest has deepened, explore what could make the project more complete and possible)

ROUND 3:

What am I learning about myself? What am I learning about my project? What next steps will I take? What help do I still need?

(to help bring it all together for the caller and his/her project)

This third round is in two steps:

1. Before starting round 3, take 20 to 25 minutes for the callers to reflect by themselves on the Round 3 questions and harvest their key insights.
2. Complete Round 3 as the other rounds. The participants listen to the harvest of the caller (their learning, their steps, help needed), and then offer any insight and any further support they can

The last step is to meet in the circle and invite the callers from each table to share answers to two questions:

What am I grateful for?

What are my next steps

If there is time, the whole group can reflect shortly on what applications are seen for practicing Pro Action Café in our own contexts. End the Pro Action Café with a collective gesture to appreciate the work done and the gifts offered and received.

Materials Needed and Set UP:

Ideally create a large circle in one part of the room and enough café tables with 4 chairs in another part of the room (if the size does not allow this, participants will move the tables and chairs themselves after the agenda has been created). Dress the tables with flipchart paper, colour pens and markers as basic café set-up. Prepare the matrix for the agenda setting of the session with the right amount of sessions (according to the number of participants divided by 4). Have fun and do good work together!

Action Learning

Description by Helen Titchen Beeth

Action learning is a technique that can be used with small groups (maximum eight people) to tackle urgent problems arising in the workplace. It has a number of astonishing and unexpected advantages:

- Team members learn about themselves and each other
- Real problems are solved
- Effective action is taken
- Leadership potential in the team is developed
- Trust and teamwork are improved
- The technique implants a learning culture in the team

How Does it Work?

Action learning is based on Socratic dialogue. Its power lies in asking questions. One member of the group is the problem presenter or owner of the focus area, and one plays the role of the action learning coach. The other members of the group make statements only in response to a question.



The rapid and profound learning that this approach unlocks has to do with the way our assumptions are constantly challenged, and we are required to unlearn beliefs and assumptions that no longer serve us or adequately reflect the facts. The fact that everybody in the group is similarly challenged makes an action learning group a safe place in which to experience that disorientation which inevitably comes when our worldview is readjusted.

From the perspective of the collective, this kind of reflection and inquiry often lead to a radical reformulation of the problem to reveal a more systematic and holistic understanding. The following description of the action learning roles can give an impression of what happens in an action learning session.

Guidelines for Action Learning Roles

Problem Presenter/Focus Area Owner

- Take 2-3 minutes to highlight key elements of the problem/challenge/task
- Trust the group to ask for important information/details
- Be brief. Too much detail gets in the way of asking questions that challenge assumptions
- Answer questions concisely
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "I'm not sure"
- Feel free to ask questions of others

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Members/Participants

- Seek to gain understanding of the problem by asking questions
- Make statements only in response to questions
- Ask questions of the other group members
- Build on each others' questions
- Listen to the action learning coach
- Avoid yes/no questions (closed questions)
- Listen, listen, listen

Action Learning Coach

- Focus on helping the group learn/improve—not on solving the problem. Do not criticize the group
- State rough agenda for the session up front: questions on the issue, followed by actions to take on the issue
- Only ask questions— a question begins the action learning session
 - “Could you take a minute or so to tell us the problem or task that you would like the group to help you with?”
- Ask questions at the first intervention (8-10 minutes into the session):
 - “How are we doing as a group so far? OK? Not OK? Great?”
 - “What are we doing well? Give an example. What was the impact?”
 - “What could we do better? Can you be specific?”
 - “Do we have agreement on the problem—yes or no?”
 - “Why don’t we all write it down? Is there agreement?”
- Areas of questioning for each additional intervention: quality of questions; building on each others' questions; willingness to challenge assumptions; creativity of questions; ask problem presenter which questions have been most helpful; quality of ideas and strategies; learnings thus far about problem context, leadership, teams
- Concluding questions:
 - (To problem presenter) “What action are you going to take as a result of this session? Were you helped?”
 - (To entire group) “What did we do best as a group? Quality of our questions? Learning or problem-solving? Team formation/development? Demonstrated leadership behaviours? What did we learn that we can apply to our lives/organizations? Transformative learning?” (While informative learning concerns changes in what we know, transformative learning happens at a higher level and produces changes in how we know, generally enabling us to embrace greater complexity)



Collective Mind Map

A collective mind map is a quick and simple way to create a shared overview of issues and opportunities relevant to a particular subject or challenge. **The mind map always has a clear focus that can be captured in a “burning” question**, such as: What are the main issues or opportunities you as a team are facing now? The mind map can be done either on a large sheet of paper or screen—electronically with a mind map program projected on a screen.

Making the Mind Map

The mind map process is led by a facilitator. All participants have access to Post-it notes. When anyone has an idea or issue they want to suggest for the mind map, they write their name on the Post-it and hold it up. Runners will collect the Post-its and give them to the facilitator, who will then call out the names in the order received. Once a person’s name is called, he or she can present the idea or issue.

The actual map is drawn up by two scribes. The central question is at the centre of the mind map. The major themes—and different issues under each theme, are recorded on the mind map radiating out from the central question.



Voting

When all themes and issues have been recorded on the mind map, the group can decide on the priorities by voting. Everyone gets a number of votes (sticky dots) that they can place on the themes or issues they see as most important.

The voting procedure gives a clear indication on which themes or issues have the highest leverage for further action. Scribes capture what is said and draw the mind map—either on a big mind map or on a screen. In the voting process, everyone has a certain number of votes to place on the themes or issues they believe are most crucial.

Principles of the Collective Mind Map

- All ideas are valuable! We do not evaluate or discard ideas at this point
- Whoever presents an idea or issue decides where it goes on the mind map, and whether it is a major theme or a sub-issue
- It’s OK to have contradicting themes or issues
- Whenever possible, give concrete examples

The facilitator explains the procedure and rules of making a collective mind map. Participants present their ideas and suggestions.

Consensus Decision Making

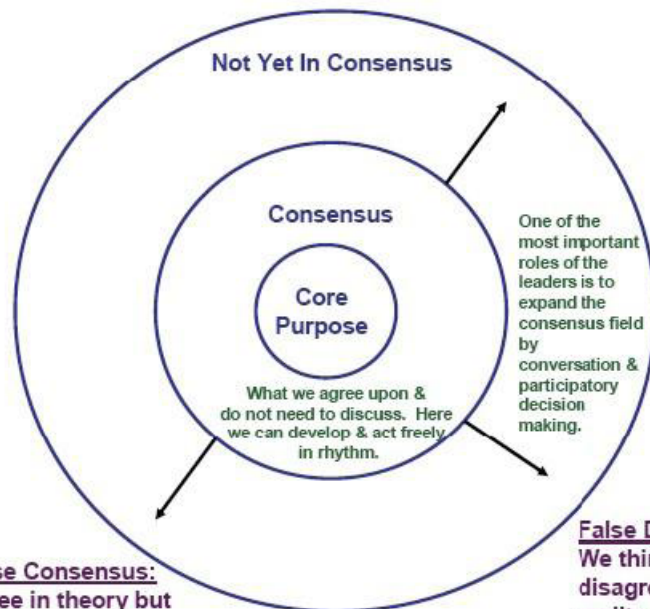
Consensus can be a very powerful model of participatory decision-making when it is considered to be a “win-win” process and held as integral to the purpose of the group. Although it is sometimes abandoned as being overly complex and time consuming, consensus decision-making opens the process to careful consideration, listening and negotiation. In this context, everyone has an opportunity to express their views and/or feelings. Each person believes he or she has been heard and understood. Although individuals may feel that if they made the decision on their own they would not go in the direction the group is going, they are willing to support this decision of the group because they have had an opportunity to provide input and influence others and feel truly understood.

Consensus should not be seen as giving power to a small group to veto a decision. Opposing a suggestion or decision also means being willing to take responsibility for moving the process forward.

In working with participatory processes, it's important to agree on the decision-making process ahead of time. Consensus usually ensures that everyone is on board and ready to act once the decision has been made. Other agreements can be to settle for 75% consensus or have a democratic decision-making process, or simply collect input and let a chosen group make the decision—whatever serves the purpose best.

Consensus:

- ❖ We see the same – collective clarity
- ❖ Not manipulated agreement



False Consensus:
Agree in theory but
not in practice

False Disagreement:
We think we are in
disagreement but in
reality we agree but
we do not know it....

What Happens When You Don't Agree on a Decision Making Process?

Sometimes a group will move forward on its path and begin making decisions before agreeing on how such decisions will be made. This may work—or appear to work—at the outset of a process, but some difficulties can occur.

When Practicing Dialogue, Remember ...

SUSPEND JUDGEMENT, ASSUMPTIONS, CERTAINTIES

It is not about knowing who is right or wrong. It is about exploring together and surfacing what we do not know or see yet.

FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS

ACCEPT THAT DIVERGENT OPINIONS ARE OKAY

We do not always need to reach a consensus. Innovation and new solutions come from putting different perspectives together

SPEAK ONE AT A TIME, SPEAK WITH INTENTION

LISTEN TO EACH OTHER CAREFULLY, LISTEN WITH INTENTION

BE AWARE OF YOUR IMPACT ON THE GROUP

We each contribute to a good dialogue. We can be aware that we do not monopolize the speaking time and make sure everybody can be heard.

CONTRIBUTE WITH YOUR MIND AND HEART

Bring your full self into the room. Allow yourself to be both a professional and a human being.

LISTEN TOGETHER FOR INSIGHTS AND DEEPER PATTERNS OR QUESTIONS

Do not remain at the surface of what you already know. Engage fully with others into bringing what we do not know yet to the surface. Listen to the meaning underneath the meaning.

LINK AND CONNECT IDEAS

This is how we can learn, surface what we do not know yet, innovate and see the connections and patterns.

SLOW DOWN

We are so often caught in a hectic flow of actions. Slowing down helps to foster more reflection.

PLAY, DOODLE, DRAW

Use a large sheet in the middle as a space to capture the results of your collective reflection. Making it enjoyable helps learning

HAVE FUN!

ESSENTIALS OF PROCESS DESIGN

Powerful Questions

While answers tend to bring us closure, questions open up to exploration

Asking the Right Question

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers our curiosity and invites us to explore further.

When inviting people into a conversation that matters, it is helpful to have an overall question—one that itself embodies the purpose of the meeting and invites people into inquiring together. This is the key question or the calling question for the conversation that is compelling enough to call forth participation. For this reason, it is best to discover and formulate the calling question with key stakeholders.

The conversation may include other questions than the calling question. Questions capture the need for people coming together and therefore, they are critical to a conversation being successful.

Some Guidelines for Asking Questions

- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Experienced hosts recommend asking open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately
- You'll know a good question when it continues to surface good ideas and possibilities
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?

A Powerful Question Focuses Attention, Intention and Energy

It:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

The Art of Harvesting

How many good conversations and crashing insights are lost because they are never recorded, shared or acted on?

What if we were planning not a meeting but a harvest?



When we understand the process of meaningful conversations as a series of connected breaths, we see that each must somehow feed into the next – and the oxygenation of the greater system requires the fruits of the conversation to leech out into the wider world.

When approaching any meeting in this spirit, we must become clear about why we are initiating the process. The Art of Hosting and the Art of Harvesting dance together as two halves of the same thing.

Harvesting is more than just taking notes. To get a sense of the complexity of this art, let's begin by picturing a field in which someone has planted wheat. How can that field of wheat be harvested?

We first imagine the harvest from that field as a farmer using equipment to cut down the wheat, thresh it, and separate the seeds from the stalks. The farmer might store the grain, further refine it, sell it quickly or wait for the price to increase.

Now imagine a geologist, a biologist and a painter harvesting from the same field. The geologist picks through the rocks and soil gathering data about the land itself. The biologist might collect insects and worms, bits of plants and organic matter. The painter sees the patterns in the landscape and chooses a palette and a perspective for work of art.

They all harvest differently from the field. The results of their work go to different places and are put to different uses. But they all have a few things in common; they have a purpose for being in the field and a set of questions about that purpose, they have a pre-determined place to use the results of the harvest, and they have specific tools to use in doing their work.

Despite the field being the same, the tools and results are specific to the need, purpose and inquiry. There are seven stages of harvesting.



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Stage 1: Sensing the need

Sensing the need may at first be intuitive or very basic – like sensing hunger, but once the sensed need becomes conscious one can act on it. We sense that we are hungry and from there we plant a garden, knowing that the work of planting, cultivating and harvesting lies before us but that the end result meets the need for sustenance.

The need is not complicated; it is real and clear and it speaks deeply and inspires invitation and action. Everything begins from this need, and the way we hold it and invite others into it informs the harvest that we take at the end of the day

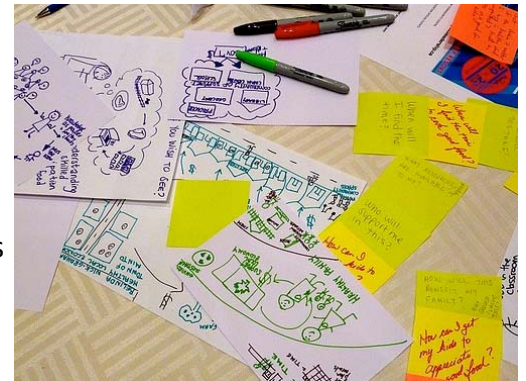
Stage 2: Preparing the field

In some cases the caller makes the field ready by creating awareness around the need. Others with a similar need will recognize the call. In preparing the field – sending out the call, giving the context, inviting etc.– we set the tone of the whole process. The seriousness and quality of the call will determine the quality of what we reap. The work of readying a field for planting can take a whole year during which we condition the soil, clear the rocks and prepare things. What we are doing here is actually harvesting a field so that the seeds can be planted.

In other words: start thinking about the harvest from the very beginning – not as an afterthought.

Stage 3: Planning the Harvest

Planning the harvest starts with and accompanies the design process. A clear purpose and some success criteria for the process of the harvest itself will add clarity and direction. What would be useful and add value - and in which form would it serve best?



Translated into a simple check-list, it becomes:

- What intent are you holding?
- Who is going to benefit?
- How can you add most value to the work at hand – how will the harvest serve best?
- What form or what media will be most effective?
- Who should host or do the harvesting?
- What is the right timing?

Stage 4: Planting the seeds

The questions around which we structure the hosting become the seeds for harvesting. All gardeners and farmers know that planting seeds depends on the season and the conditions. You can't just plant whenever you want to. You plant once the conditions are right to maximize the yield.

In hosting practice, this means being sensitive to timing when asking questions. In sowing the seeds that will drive the inquiry – identifying and asking the strategic and meaningful

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questions – you determine the output. So in planning the harvest, ask yourself, “What is it that this process needs to yield? What information, ideas, output or outcome will benefit us here and now, and what might take us to the next level of inquiry?”

The process itself is an on-going one. With each part of the process, you harvest something. Some of it you need to use right away, to help lead you into the next process. Some of the harvest you will need later. So part of planning the harvest is also knowing for whom, when and how you need to use it. Another part of the planning is asking yourself in which format the harvest will serve you best.

Stage 5: Tending the crop

Protect the integrity of the crop. Nurture it as it grows, weed it and thin it to keep the strong plants growing and get rid of all that will not nourish or serve. This involves a combination of feeding the field and letting it grow. But it also involves just sitting in the field. Holding space for what is emerging and enjoying it.

During the process, enjoy seeing your work unfold in all its complexity. The more you can welcome the growth you are witnessing, the higher the quality of the harvest. Now you are in the pulse of noticing both the quality of the field and the quality of the crops.

This is where we engage in conversation and exploration – where the richness of the harvest is born. The richer the conversation or exchange, the richer the harvest!

Stage 6: Picking the fruits

The simplest way to harvest is to record what is being said and done, the output of the conversations, etc. This creates a record or collective memory. Recording can be done:

- in your notes, which will be subjective
- or transcripts of output from conversations recorded on tapes, etc., which will be objective
- recording can also be done with pictures / photographs / video / film.
- pictures evoke and recall feelings, atmospheres, situations.
- or you can video the conversation - record both verbally and visually

It is helpful to give some thought in the planning phase to how you want to harvest. What kind of records, templates etc. will help you gather the relevant information or knowledge?

Stage 7: Preparing and processing the fruits

Creating a memory is the first step. As we pick the fruits or seeds for processing, some will be used right away, some will be used for further processing and some will be used as seed for the next season.

The second step is making collective sense and meaning. This is where we add value and make the data useful. There are many ways of doing this. The general idea is to take the many bits of information and transform them into “holons” – wholes that are also parts of greater wholes.

Hosting & Designing a Participatory Process as a Team

Working Together to Create a Container

How are we going to behave together in pursuit of our purpose?

When we enter an inquiry where we do not have ready or easy answers and we cannot see the obvious solutions, we also enter “chaos” together. In walking the chaordic path together it is wise to start by creating the conditions that can help contain that chaos. We call this creating a “container”.

One fundamental way to create a container is to agree on how we want to work or “travel” together in pursuit of our goal. In other words, we define some agreements or principles of cooperation.

Principles—when defined with clarity, conviction and common understanding—guide our pursuit of purpose. Principles bind a community together and serve as a touchstone to remind us of how we have agreed to act and decide together around our purpose.

A Core Hosting Team Holds a Field

This is really co-creative effort. Some of the functions can merge (eg. Stage managing and logistics), depending on the size and complexity of the process. The strategic perspective is held by the caller and members of his/her team on the content level and by the hosts who hold the process level.

Who Should be on the Hosting Team?

An ideal hosting team consists of:

- The caller who has sensed the need to convene this process
- Members of his/her team who have in-depth understanding of the context
- Internal consultants who understand the culture of the organization and how change can be led and accompanied successfully in this context
- External consultants who bring their experience and practices from outside and help the team to take some distance from the context in which they are absorbed in order to gain some fresh perspectives

The size of this team will vary depending on the scale of the process

A Hosting Team is About Learning Together

In such a team, everybody is learning. Being clear about what you can contribute and what you can expect to learn will help the team to work consciously together in service of the people invited and the purpose. It is highly recommended to have seasoned people in the team who can help less experienced practitioners to deepen their understanding of this way of working through practicing. Sometimes, these seasoned practitioners will not even be visible to the participants. They act then as coaches of the team.

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Detailed Roles in a Hosting Team

Caller

The caller is the client of the process. He or she has sensed the need for it and has invited the hosting team to help him/her give birth to a process out of which the expected outcomes could be produced by a group. The caller is part of the process to:

- Co-draft and send the invitation
- Welcome people
- Frame the purpose
- Listen to what is coming out of the conversations
- Help the hosting team to adapt the process if necessary
- Commit to follow-up on the outcomes

Strategic Perspective Team

The caller and other people with the strongest stakes in the outcomes of the event have the following responsibilities:

- Liaise with speakers to help them see where their interventions fit
- Liaise with guests to help them catch up when they arrive and make sense of the outcomes of the seminar
- Listen intentionally for horizontal questions
- Capture learnings of this group
- Liaising with the hosts to keep the event on track
- Welcome

Hosting Team

- Facilitate the processes
- Be a visible part of the team

Speakers

The speakers include the caller and perspective-givers, and those who make concluding remarks.

Harvesting Team

- Support the strategic group and speakers at any time
- Collect the results of the conversations on the appropriate supports at different levels (meta level, full details)
- Collect all pieces of harvesting throughout the event
- Have responsibility for recording tools: mind maps, harvesting sheets, pictures, landscape
- Produce outputs: landscape, newsletter/live minutes, full record, strategic paper

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Welcome Team

The welcome team is responsible for speakers, guests and participants and has the following responsibilities:

- Have them all sign the presence list
- Hand out badges and welcome pack

Logistical Team

- Liaise with people in charge of the venue on any issue
- Ensure proper set-up of the space
- Handle A/V
- Handle requests coming from all other teams

Stage Manager

- Prepare in advance and distribute all handouts and harvesting sheets to participants
- Manage slide shows whenever used

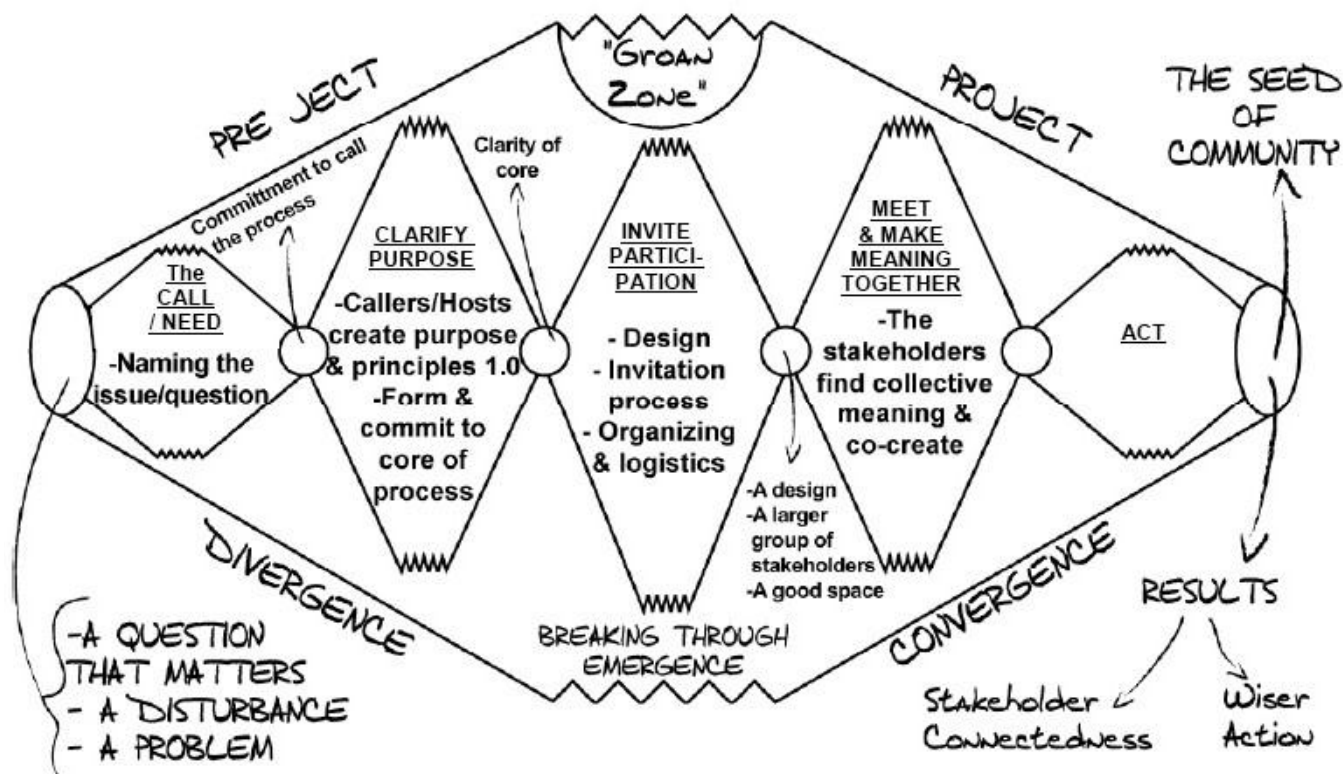
Follow-Up/Strategic Continuity

- Identify the wisest next steps in service of the development of individuals, the organization and the common good



5 Breaths of Design

Over the years many hosts have seen their work with different (larger scale) initiatives as a sequence of different “breaths”, different phases of divergence and convergence. This iterative flow has become known among practitioners as the “Five Breaths”. As we learn through reflecting on our work, this pattern will no doubt become clearer.



First Breath—The Call/Need

- Name the issue: Call the core question. We have noticed that there is always a caller—a person who deeply holds a question, a problem, a challenge. Sometimes there are several callers. The callers are the ones who invite the host(s) to help them.
- Wise action: Focus the chaos of holding the collective uncertainty and fear—step into the centre of the disturbance
- Don't move too fast
- Question: What is really at stake here? What if some of us worked together to surface the real question and need that matters to the community?

When the caller has committed to call the process, we go to the next phase.

Second Breath—Clarify Purpose

- Create the ground: The callers and hosts work to create collective clarity of purpose and the first articulation of principles
- Wise action: Engage
- Don't make assumptions
- Question: How to get from need to purpose? What is our purpose? How to see and feed the group value?

This phase is over once the core of clarity has emerged.

Third Breath—Invite Participation

- Giving form and structure: Design an invitation process
- Wise action: Keep checking to be sure your design and invitation serve the purpose
- Don't make your design too complex (match it to the purpose)
- Question: How do we invite people to participate in a way that moves them to show up? How do we let go of our expectations that certain people need to be there?

The meeting has been designed, a larger group of stakeholders has been invited, a good meeting space has been found. It's time to meet!

Fourth Breath—Meet!

- Meeting: Hold conversation
- Wise action: Our role is to host the group, the purpose and the questions
- Don't go alone
- Question: How can I best serve as the instrument/container to allow the collective wisdom to emerge?

Make meaning together—when the meeting is done, the group of stakeholders find collective meaning and start to co-create. This is where the harvest is important—to capture key messages and insights and make sense of them.

Fifth Breath—Act

Here the seed of community gets born, and the results are a connectedness between the stakeholders and wiser actions.

- Practice: Perform the wise actions decided on during the conversation. Follow up—continued learning and leading from the field
- Wise action: Always come back to the purpose
- Don't lose sight of the purpose or it won't be embodied
- Question: How do we sustain the self-organization?

From here the next calling question arises.

The Chaordic Stepping Stones

The chaordic path is the path that walks between chaos and order. When we don't know where we are going, or what the future means for us, we can bring a little bit of form to our work by working with clear steps. These steps are intended to create generative structures, structures that allow us to create together, without stifling creativity and the emergence of new ideas and new ways of doing things.

There are clear strategic steps we take when walking the chaordic path. These steps allow us to create conversational processes that are rooted in real need that are sustainable for the community they serve and the people working within them. These steps can be used both as a planning tool and to help understand what you are discovering about an organization, community or initiative.

In designing an initiative like this, we use these stepping stones in order. Think of them nested one within the other. You cannot build the next one until the previous one is in place.



The Chaordic Stepping Stones

The Stepping Stones

Each of these stepping stones is activated by asking key questions. In beginning to design work together we can select from these questions (or create others) to help us explore each stone as we lay it in place.

NEED

The need is the compelling reason for doing anything. Sensing the need is the first step to designing a meeting, organizational structure or change initiative that is relevant. The need is outside of our work: it is the thing that is served by the work you are doing.

- What time is it in the world now ?
- What time is it for our initiative now ?
- What are the challenges and opportunities

we are facing ?

- What do I really need to be able to understand and work on in the world?
- What is the need that this project can uniquely meet?
- What does the world need this conference to be?

PURPOSE

From the need flows the purpose. Purpose statements are clear and compelling and the guide us in doing our best possible work.

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- If this work should live up to its fullest potential, what do you dream (or vision) is possible?
- What is the purpose we can adopt that will best meet the need?
- What could this work do/create/inspire?
- What is the next level for our work? Where should we be heading?
- What is the simplest and most powerful question we could keep at the core of our work?

PRINCIPLES

Principles of co-operation help us to know how we will work together. It is very important that these principles be simple, co-owned and well understood. These are not principles that are platitudes or that lie on a page somewhere. They are crisp statements of how we agree to operate together so that over the long term we can sustain the relationships that make this work possible.

- What are the principles we want to enact at for our learning networks?
- What is it important to remember about how we want to work with the participants in our initiative?
- What do we think is most important to remember as we design to meet the need and purpose?
- What unique ways of doing work and being together can we bring to this work?
- If our team should live up to its fullest potential - what do you dream (or vision) possible for this team?

PEOPLE

Once the need and the purpose are in the place and we have agreed on our principles of co-operation, we can begin to identify the people that are involved in our work. Mapping the network helps us to see who is in this work for us and who will have an interest in what we are doing.

- Who is in the room?
- Who is not in the room and how do we bring them in?
- How do we leverage relationships to propagate the ideas generated by our work together?
- Who will be interested in the results of our work?

CONCEPT

As we move to a more concrete idea of what our structures are, we begin to explore the concepts that will be useful. This is a high level look at the shape of our endeavour. For example, if our need was to design a way to cross a body of water, we could choose a bridge, a causeway or a ferry. The concept is important, because it gives form to very different structures for doing our work. In our work together we might explore here the different kinds of structures including circles and networks and really understand what these are, how they operate, how they are embedded with various contexts and cultures and what implications each has for our work.

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- What are the shapes that we might choose for our work?
- What is the deeper pattern of our work and what organizational forms are in alignment with that?
- How might we activate our principles to best do our work?

LIMITING BELIEFS

So much of what we do when we organize ourselves is based on unquestioned models of behaviour. These patterns can be helpful but they can also limit us in fulfilling our true potential. We cannot create innovation in the world using old models and approaches. It pays to examine ways in which we assume work gets done in order to discover the new ways that might serve work with new results. Engaging in this work together brings us into a co-creative working relationship, where we can help each other into new and powerful ways of working together, alleviating the fear and anxiety of the unknown.

- What makes us tremble, and what do we fear about new ways of working together?
- Who would we be without our stories of old ways of working?
- What will it take for us to fully enter into working in new and unfamiliar ways?
- What is our own learning edge in working together?
- What do you need from our core team to feel supported in the places that make you anxious?

STRUCTURE

Once the concept has been chosen, it is time to create the structure that will channel our resources. It is in these conversations that we make decisions about the resources of the group: time, money, energy, commitment, and attention.

- Who are we becoming when we meet and work together this way?
- How do we support the aspirations of the group?
- What is the lightest structure that will serve our purpose and need?
- What role might the Core team play when the project is over?
- How do we wisely combine the various organizational concepts to support our work and sustain the results?

PRACTICE

The ongoing practice within the structures we build is important. This is the world of to do lists, conference calls and email exchanges. The invitation here is to practice working with one another in alignment with the designs we have created.

- What do we need to do to sustain our work together?
- What is our own practice of working in networks?
- How do we leverage relationships and support the work that arises from them?
- How do we sustain and nourish our relationships and collective aspirations?
- What commitments are we willing to make to contribute to the success of our endeavour?

HARVEST

There is no point in doing work in the world unless we plan to harvest the fruits of our labours. Harvesting includes making meaning of our work, telling the story and feeding forward our results so that they have the desired impacts in the world.

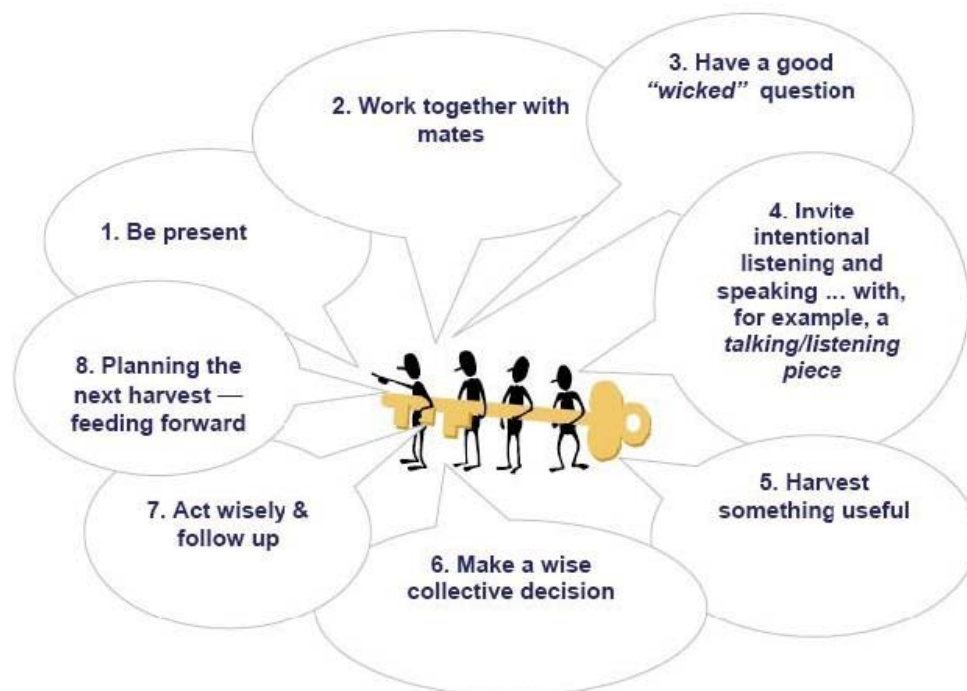
- What are the forms of harvest from our work that best serves the need?
- What intentional harvest will serve our purpose?
- What are the artifacts that will be the most powerful representations of what we have created?
- How will we carry the DNA of the our work forward?
- What are the feedback loops that we need to design to ensure that learning and change accelerates itself?
- How will we stay open to emergent learning?
- What are the questions we need to carry about what we are learning by meeting this way?

It is very important to note that harvesting is an activity that needs to be planned up front, in the spirit of “we are not planning a meeting, we are planning a harvest.”

This presentation was created by Chris Corrigan (chris@chriscorrigan.com) and refined by many others in the Art of Hosting (www.artofhosting.org) community of practice.

8 Little Helpers

Eight “helpers” are the source of good conversational design. At the bare minimum, if you use these tools, conversations will grow deeper, and work will occur at a more meaningful level. These eight helpers bring form to fear and uncertainty, and help us stay in the chaos of not knowing the answers. They help us to move through uncomfortable places together, like conflict, uncertainty, fear and the groan zone and to arrive at wise action.



1. Be Present

Inviting presence is a core practice of hosting, but it is also a key practice for laying the ground work for a good meeting. There are many ways of bringing a group to presence, including:

- Start with a poem, reading or prayer
- Start with a moment of silence
- Check in with a personal question related to the theme of the meeting
- Pass a talking piece and provide space for each voice to be heard
- Start well. Start slowly. Check everyone in

2. Work Together with Mates

Relationships create sustainability. If you stay together as friends, mates or family, you become accountable to one another, and you can face challenges better. When you feel your relationship to your closest mates slipping, call it out and host a conversation about it. Trust is a group’s most precious resource. Use it well.

3. Have a Good “Wicked Question”

A good wicked question is aligned with the need and purpose of the meeting and invites us to go to another level. Good questions are put into the centre of a circle, and the group speaks through them. Having a powerful question at the centre keeps the focus on the work and helps groups stay away from unhelpful behaviours such as personal attacks, politics and closed minds.

It is wise to design these questions beforehand and make them essential pieces of the invitation for others to join you.

As you dive into these questions, harvest the new questions that are arising. They represent the path you need to take

A good question has the following characteristics:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

4. Invite Intentional Listening and Speaking

In its simplest form, a talking piece is simply an object that passes from hand to hand. When one is holding the piece, one is invited to speak and everyone is invited to listen. Using a talking piece has the powerful effect of ensuring that every voice is heard and it sharpens both speech and listening. It slows down a conversation so that when things are moving too fast, or people begin speaking over one another and the listening stops, a talking piece restores calm and smoothness. Conducting the opening round of a conversation with a talking piece sets the tone for the meeting and helps people to remember the power of this simple tool.

Of course, a talking piece is really a minimal form of structure. Every meeting should have some form of structure that helps to work with the chaos and order that is needed to co-discover new ideas. There are many forms and processes to choose from but it is important to align them with the nature of living systems if innovation and wisdom is to arise from chaos and uncertainty

5. Harvest Something Useful

At more sophisticated levels, when you need to do more work, you can use more formal processes that work with these kinds of contexts. Each of these processes has a sweet spot, its own best use that you can think about as you plan meetings. Blend as necessary.

Never meet unless you plan to harvest your learnings. The basic rule of thumb here is to remember that you are not planning a meeting; you are instead planning a harvest. Know what is needed and plan the process accordingly. Harvests don't always have to be visible; sometimes you plan to meet just to create learning. But support that personal learning with good questions and practice personal harvesting.

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To harvest well, be aware of four things:

Create an artifact. Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Make a mind map, draw pictures, take notes, but whatever you do create a record of your conversation.

Have a feedback loop. Artifacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how you will use your harvest before you begin your meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.

Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest. Harvest answers to the specific questions you are asking, but also make sure you are paying attention to the cool stuff that is emerging in good conversations. There is real value in what's coming up that none could anticipate. Harvest it.

The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned. Don't just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out Post-it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Use your creative spirit to find ways to have the group host their own harvest.

6. Make a Wise, Collective Decision

If your meeting needs to come to a decision, make it a wise one. Wise decisions emerge from conversation, not voting. The simplest way to arrive at a wise decision is to use the three thumbs consensus process. It works like this:

First, clarify a proposal. A proposal is a suggestion for how something might be done. Have it worded and written and placed in the centre of the circle. Poll the group asking each person to offer their thumb in three positions: UP means "I'm good with it", SIDEWAYS means "I need more clarity before I give the thumbs up", DOWN means "this proposal violates my integrity ... I mean seriously".

As each person indicates their level of support for the proposal, note the down and sideways thumbs. Go to the down thumbs first and ask, "What would it take for you to be able to support this proposal?" Collectively help the participant word another proposal, or a change to the current one. If the process is truly a consensus-building one, people are allowed to vote thumbs down only if they are willing to participate in making a proposal that works. Hijacking a group gets rewarded with a vote. Majority rules.

Once you have dealt with the down thumbs, do the same with the sideways thumbs. Sideways doesn't mean "no" but rather "I need clarity". Answer the questions or clarify the concerns.

If you have had a good conversation leading to the proposal, you should not be surprised by any down thumbs. If you are, reflect on that experience and think about what you could have done differently.

7. Act and Follow Up

Once you have decided what to do, act. There isn't much more to say about that except that wise action is action that doesn't overextend or under extend the resources of a group. Action arises from the personal choice to take responsibility for what you love. Commit to the work and do it.

8. Plan the Next Harvest

Most harvesting is done to bring closure to a process or brings us to the next level of understanding. More importantly, it helps us to know collectively, to see the same picture and share the same understanding together.

A Few Comments ...

The above reflections mainly concern collective harvesting.

Individual reflection and harvest will raise the level of the collective harvest. During learning processes, individual harvesting can be done intentionally, by using a journal as a learning tool.

Web-based tools open up a whole world of possibilities that are not dealt with here. Harvesting the "soft" is much more subtle and subjective than dealing with the "cognitive" or more objective, tangible parts. A qualitative inquiry into what we have noticed, what has shifted or changed in our relationships, in the culture or atmosphere may give us some information about the softer part of the harvest.

For the most effective harvest, these eight steps should be planned beforehand, as part of designing the whole process.

Reflective Practices

Reflection is an invitation to think deeply about our actions so that we may act with more insight and effectiveness in the future. It is probably something you do already: processing, analyzing and integrating your experiences through writing, discussions with friends or art, for example. As related to service, reflection is the use of creative and critical thinking skills to help prepare for, succeed in, and learn from service experience, and to examine the larger picture and context in which service occurs (Jim and Pan Toole, Compass Institute).

Tips for Success

- Designing a Reflection Activity
- An effective reflection activity should:
 - Have an outcome in mind (i.e. leadership, team building, improved critical thinking, acknowledgement)
 - Be appropriate for the team (age, culture)
 - Happen before, during, and as soon after the service experience as possible
 - Be directly linked to the project or experience
 - Dispel stereotypes, address negative experiences, increase appreciation for community needs, increase commitment to service
 - Be varied for different learning styles, ages
 - Actively involve the service recipients for a really compelling reflection session
 - Be facilitated well for maximum participation, creativity and learning

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- Seek a balance between being flexible to address members' needs, and keep the process consistent with the theme. In other words, if some notable incident happens during the day, or has been forming for some time, it will probably be on the members' minds enough to prevent their presence in any other conversation.

Thus, even if you have an outcome in mind, what needs to get said may be the most important thing to discuss or reflect upon. Similarly, the conversation cannot be allowed to veer without focus: Reflection questions often lead to other questions, which lead to other questions. While these diversions can lead to great discussion, they can, as easily, go all over the place with little value for participants. Maintain focus by bringing it back to the theme or significant topic, and presenting "so what, now what" questions before leaving a decent topic

- Use silence: People need some silence to reflect internally, some more than others. Ask the question then wait
- Ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to become involved
- Remember that in a group setting, each member of the group will learn and reflect in a different way. Allow space for diversity; it, too, is part of the reflection process for the group

What? So What? Now What?

This is a well-used and successful model to assist you in designing the reflection activities. Although you can derive learning from each question, focusing on all three will provide broader insights and keep participants from getting stuck on only the facts or just the feelings.

WHAT?

Reporting what happened, objectively. Without judgment or interpretation, participants describe in detail the facts and event(s) of the experience.

Questions include:

What happened? What did you observe? What issue is being addressed or population is being served? What were the results of the project? What events or “critical incidents” occurred? What was of particular notice? How did you feel about that? Let’s hear from someone who had a different reaction?

SO WHAT?

What did you learn? What difference did the event make? Participants discuss their feelings, ideas and analysis of the experience.

Questions can also be focused on the meaning or importance of the activity to:

- The Participant: Did you learn a new skills or clarify an interest? Did you hear, smell, feel anything that surprised you? What feelings or thoughts seem most strong today? How is your experience different from what you expected? What struck you about that? How was this significant? What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? What lens are you viewing from? What do the critical incidents mean to you? How did you respond to them? What did you like/dislike about the experience?
- The Recipient: Did the “service” empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient? What did you learn about the people/community that we served? What might impact the recipient’s views or experience of the project?
- The Community: What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community? How does this project address those needs? How, specifically, has the community benefitted? What is the least impact you can imagine for the project? With unlimited creativity, what is the most impact on the community that you can imagine?
- The Group (group projects): In what ways did the group work well together? What does that suggest to you about the group? How might the group have accomplished its task more effectively? In what ways did others help you today (and vice versa)? How were decisions made? Were everybody’s ideas listened to?

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NOW WHAT?

How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience? Participants consider the broader implications of the experience and apply learning. Be aware to strike a balance between realistic, reachable goals and openness to spontaneity and change.

Questions include:

What seem to be the root causes of the issue/problem addressed? What kinds of activities are currently taking place in the community related to this project? What contributes to the success of projects like this? What hinders success? What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply this learning? What would you like to learn more about, related to this project or issue? What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties? What information can you share with your peers or community volunteers? If you were in charge of this project, what would you do to improve it? If you could do the project again, what would you do differently? What would “complete” this service?

Journaling: A Primer

Journaling is one of the best reflection tools. Ideally, a 10-15 minute period would be provided every day to journal; preferably at the end of the day or during/after a debrief. It is helpful if there is substantial structure to ensure quality, conscientious journaling. Regardless of the time allotted, it is important to encourage participants to write whatever comes to mind. This entails a commitment to confidentiality that nobody will ever share what they have written unless they want to.

Journaling Methods

Clusters: Have people shout out words or phrases that describe the day. Ask each person to take two minutes to write five or six words in random spaces on their journaling page. From there they do a free-write exercise focusing on those five or six items and how they are related.

The fly on the wall: Ask participants to take a couple of moments to reflect on the day (where they've been, what they've done, whom they've worked with, tools they've used). Then ask them to pretend they were a "fly on the wall", observing but not participating in the scene, and write a short descriptive passage based on their observations. You can also use any animal or plant or person that was near the project site.

The critical incident: Choose an incident that involved the entire team and give them a couple of minutes to think about the incident. Then ask them to write a detailed, factual report of what happened, making sure to answer the four "W" questions: who, what, where, when. You can then have participants share their stories to see how they differ from another.

The letter: Have participants write a letter to themselves, a relative, an historical figure or a political figure describing the experience and what it means to them, or ask for some advice

Dialogue: A good one for developing observation and communication skills. Ask participants in the morning to pay special attention to conversations they hear throughout the day, including light conversations between all. Ask them to pay special attention to mannerisms, accents and the tone of the conversation. Later, have the participants pick a dialogue and duplicate how it went as closely as possible. This should be done in a light-hearted manner on a light-hearted day to avoid a "bashing" session. This is an exercise that gets better with time, as their observation and retention skills improve.

Different perspectives: A great one for developing empathy skills. Ask participants to recall a specific occurrence from the day that involved some degree of conflict. Ask them to assume the viewpoint opposite that which they actually held during this conflict (or the viewpoint they were the least empathetic with), and write a description of the conflict from this perspective. This can include what happened, their role in it, what they want, what they envision as the ideal solution. Good debrief questions are, "How did it feel to do this writing? How were you able to get into their shoes? How was it difficult? What is one thing you realized through this writing?"

The free write: For a predetermined amount of time, participants engage in continuous writing by keeping their pens moving, even if only to write "I don't know what to write". It is helpful to trigger the free writing with an open-ended sentence, such as "I don't think I'll ever forget ..." or "If I could do one thing differently, I would ...".

Listening Practices

Top Ten Powerful Listening Practices

1. **Stop Talking**—One person speaks at a time. One of the most irritating listening habits is that of interrupting.
2. **Pause Before Speaking**—Allow the person who is speaking time to complete their thought, wait a few seconds before responding. Another variation on this is to ask “Is there anything else?” There almost always is.
3. **Listen to Yourself**—Be in touch with your inner voice. Ask yourself, “What wants to be said next?”
4. **Listen for Understanding**—You do not have to agree with what you hear, or even believe it, to listen to understand the other person.
5. **Ask for Clarification**—If you do not understand what someone is saying, just ask.
6. **Let the Speaker Know That you Have Heard Them**— Be aware of body language: nodding, facial expressions.
7. **Be Patient and Present**—Listening well takes time and your presence.
8. **Listen With an Open Mind**—Be curious and appreciative of what you are listening to. Listen for new ideas instead of judging and evaluating.
9. **Pay Attention to the Environment**—Stop what you are doing to listen. Turn off background noise when possible; move to a quieter corner of the room; clear your desk.
10. **Listen with Empathy and Compassion**—Put your agenda aside for the moment. Put yourself in their shoes.

Reflective Listening/Mirroring Technique

Reflective listening/mirroring is the restatement of what you have heard a speaker say for purposes of clarification. A second stage can be used to state a feeling the listener has heard embedded in the message. We are checking out our interpretations by asking if the reflection is a correct interpretation. We are reflecting, but always with a question mark. No one like to be told how they are feeling if it does not match what they are feeling.

Reflective Listening is Used:

- When we sense we do not fully understand and we would like to learn more about how he/she experiences their situation;
- When we sense there is more to what the other person is saying than what is being expressed;
- To summarize from time to time in order to pull together important ideas and establish a basis for further discussion;
- To verify a feeling the listener has heard embedded in the message;
- To validate a quality or value the listener might have heard embedded in the message.

Benefits of Reflective Listening

- The communication level may be deepened
- The listener may become more empathetic/compassionate towards the speaker
- The speaker may be able to gain greater self-understanding, clarity and vulnerability through effective mirroring
- A shift in perspective may occur through mirroring statements

First level: Facts

The listener repeats what the person has said and checks for confirmation that the important parts of the communication were heard accurately .

Second level: Feelings

The listener expresses the essence of meaning behind the words, including the feeling and tone and asks for accuracy.

Third level: Essence

The listener deepens the mirroring to the being or core level of the speaker's communication and reflects the values or essence of what was heard.

Resources

Websites:

Art of Hosting: www.artofhosting.org
Co-created by many Art of Hosting stewards

Shape Shift Strategies: www.shapeshiftstrategies.com (Resources section)
Kathy Jourdain, Process Artist

Myrgan Inc.: www.myrgan.com (Resources section)
Tim Merry, Slam poetry , social entrepreneurship, participatory and strategic leadership

Art of Hosting TV:
www.evolutionarynexus.org/community/art_hosting
www.vimeo.com/groups/hosting
Provides videos about several AoH topics

Evolutionary Nexus: www.evolutionarynexus.org
An online conversation and knowledge space, with a separate Art of Hosting section

Art of Hosting Online Community Canada: artofhosting.ning.com/group/aohcanada

Books:

Processes

Baldwin, Christina

- Calling the Circle: The first and future culture
 - Storycatcher: Making sense of our lives through the power and practice of story
 - The Circle Way: A leader in every chair
- www.peerspirit.com

Brown, Juanita and David Isaacs & the World Café Community

- The World Café: Shaping our Future Through Conversations that Matter
- www.theworldcafe.com

Cooperrider, David and Srivastva

- Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change
- <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>

Bold Leadership to Recharge Our Rural Communities

Gray, Dave et al.

- Game Storming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers

Herman, Michael and Chris Corrigan, Chris (eds.)

- Open Space Technology: A User's NON-Guide

Corrigan, Chris

- The Tao of Holding Space

www.chriscorrigan.com

Holman, Peggy, Cady, Steve and Devane, Tom (eds):

- The Change Handbook: Large Group Methods for Shaping the Future.

Isaacs, William

- Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together.

Kaner, Sam et. al.

- The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making

Miller Bojer et.al.

- Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change

Owen, Harrison

- Open Space Technology: A User's Guide
- Expanding our Now: The Story of Open Space Technology
- The Spirit of Leadership: Liberating the Leader in Each of Us

www.openspaceworld.org

Whitney, Dianna and Trosten-Bloom, A.

- The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change

Ways of Being in Organization and Community

Atlee, Tom.

- The Tao of Democracy

Ball, Jennifer et al.

- Doing Democracy with Circles

The Berkana Institute and Neighborhood Centers Inc.

- Health Community Tool Kit -- Unlocking the Strength of Our Communities: A Step by Step Guide to Appreciative Community Building

Bold Leadership to Recharge Our Rural Communities

Block, Peter

- Community: The Structure of Belonging

lock, Peter and McKight, John

- The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods

Born, Paul

- Community Conversations
- Creating Vibrant Communities

Bornstein, David

- How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas

Briskin, Alan et. al.

- The Power of Collective Wisdom and the Trap of Collective Folly

Brown, Jim

- The Imperfect Board Member

Cziksentmihaly, M.

- Flow
- Good Business

Frost, Peter

- Toxic Emotions at Work

Gottlieb, Hildy

- The Pollyanna Principles: Reinventing “Nonprofit Organizations” to Create the Future of Our World

Herman, Michael.

- The Inviting Organization Emerges

Kahane, Adam

- Solving Tough Problems

Jaworski, J.

- Synchronicity

Jones, Michael

- Artful Leadership: Awakening the Commons of the Imagination

Marshall, Stephanie Pace

- The Power to Transform: Leadership that Brings Learning and Schooling to Life

Bold Leadership to Recharge Our Rural Communities

Scharmer, Otto

- Theory U

Senge, Peter

- The Fifth Discipline

Sutherland, Jessie

- Worldview skills: transforming conflict from the inside out

Wenger, Etienne

- Communities of Practice: Learning, meaning, and identity

Wheatley, Margaret

- Leadership and the New Science
- Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future
- Finding Our Now
- A Simpler Way

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