Introduction to The World Café

A Training for Facilitators/Hosts
Starters

- Opening & Welcome Remarks
- Training Framework & Context
- Introductions & Agreements
Café Group Agreements

- Participate as fully as you are able.
- Speak from your own experience: your truth, your experiences, your perspectives.
- Listen attentively: let go of stories that make it hard to understand each other.
- Trust that you will know what to say: no need to rehearse.
- Say just enough: without feeling rushed, be concise and considerate of the time of others.
- It’s OK to pass if you prefer not to speak.
- Turn off cell phones (or silence them).
Entrees

- Foundations of The World Café
  - The Conversation that Started it All
  - The café setting as a familiar cultural setting
  - The role and use of questions to engage collaborative thinking & learning
  - Cross-pollination of ideas and connections among diverse perspectives
  - Drawing or writing on the tablecloth as a way of seeing each other's ideas
  - The discovery(or re-discovery): this is a deep living pattern of how people share knowledge, and experience innovation and change.
Conversations Matter—a lot!

- Research by evolutionary biologist Humberto Maturana and cognitive scientist, Francisco Varela reaffirms the central notion of the World Café model:
  - Humans evolved the unique capacity for talking together and making distinctions of meaning in language.
  - Since our earliest ancestors, conversation has been our primary means for discovering what we care about, sharing knowledge, imagining the future and acting together to survive and thrive.
  - Conversations create meaning-making networks that shape our lives.
  - Conversations are the lifeblood and heartbeat of social systems and change.
Consider the Conversations…

...you are currently having in your family, your organization, or your community. To what degree do they create frustration and fragment efforts or offer insights and ways to work collectively?
What is the World Café?

- “A method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter to the real-life situations of organizations and communities.”
- A practical and creative way to grow our capacity for thinking together.
- A metaphor for noticing the already existing living networks where we develop new knowledge and co-evolve the future together.
Assumptions that Shape the Process

1. People already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges.
2. The answers we need are available to us.
3. We are wiser together than we are alone.
Cafés Come in Many Flavors

- World Café
- Knowledge Café
- Community Café
- Parent Café
- Kids Cafe
The Flow of Café Conversations

As people share insights between tables, the “magic in the middle” and a sense of the whole become more accessible.
Role of the Overall Host - Before the Event

- Work with the planning team to determine the purpose and frame questions for the Café.
- Work with the planning team to name of the Café.
- Help frame the invitation.
- Work with others to create a hospitable, welcoming and informal Café environment.
Welcome participants and introduces the purpose and theme of the Café

Explain the flow of the process, conversation guidelines and role of table hosts

Facilitates participant introductions

Introduces speakers as needed

Pose the questions for rounds and make sure question is visible to all.

Explain World Café guidelines and make sure they are visible to all.

Explain logistics, table host role and process

Monitor time

Move among the tables and answer questions if requested.

Remind people to write, doodle and draw

Facilitate the “harvesting” portion of the Café and ensure key ideas are recorded

Facilitate closing

Role of the Overall Host-at the Event
The Table Host:

- Remains at the table when others leave and welcomes new people to the conversation at the beginning of each round.
- Is a full participant in the conversations, not a facilitator.
- Offers a summary of key points and insights from the prior conversation.
- Guides the group to make sure they use up the full time allocated for each round.
- Gently reminds the group of the conversation guidelines as needed.
- Encourages others at the table to jot down, doodle or draw ideas, key connections, questions, etc.
Table Host Tasks:

- Encourage and nurture conversation
- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak
- Share their own views about the question
- Ask follow up questions to clarify or help explore more deeply
- Support participants as needed—to speak up or stay quiet
- Remind participants to write, doodle and draw key connections, ideas, discoveries and deeper questions as they arise.
- Model good listening
- Use body language to convey interest and attention
- Allow for silence
Table Hosts Don’t:

- Fill every silence
- Direct the conversation—model, not control is your role
- Feel like you have to respond to every comment—let the others respond
- Analyze or judge other people’s comments
- Allow one person to dominate the conversation
7 Design Principles

Set the CONTEXT
Create hospitable SPACE
Explore QUESTIONS that matter
Encourage everyone’s CONTRIBUTIONS
Connect diverse PERSPECTIVES
LISTEN together for insights
Share collective DISCOVERIES
1. Set the Context—Purpose, Participants, Parameters

The Purpose

- Why is this conversation important?
- Why are we bringing people together?
- What focus, themes or questions will be most relevant & meaningful?
- What is the best outcome you can imagine?

The Participants

- Who needs to be in the conversation in order to achieve our purpose?
- What additional people or perspectives could add valuable insights?
- What do we know about who’s coming and what are they’re needs, interests and questions?
The Parameters

- Consider the “givens” you have to work with:
  - Time constraints
  - Location/venue
  - Politics
  - Money and Human Resources
2. Create Hospitable Space

- Your invitation begins to set the space—make it creative, informal and personal.
- If possible, make the space look like an actual café—tablecloths, flowers, 4-5 chairs at round tables.
- A space with natural light is ideal.
- Greet everyone at the door with a smile.
- Play music, display art, add flowers or plants.
- Provide beverages and snacks
3. Explore Questions that Matter

“If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in five minutes.”

(Albert Einstein)
### Powerful Questions & Key Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watson &amp; Crick</td>
<td>What might DNA look like in 3D?</td>
<td>Discovery of the double helix</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Burke, CEO Johnson &amp; Johnson</td>
<td>What is the most ethical action we might take?</td>
<td>Restoration of consumer confidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rat Kroc</td>
<td>Where can I get a good hamburger on the road?</td>
<td>Creation of McDonalds restaurants</td>
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A Powerful Question:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought-provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Surfaces unconscious assumptions
- Generates curiosity
- Stimulates reflective conversation
- Opens new possibilities

- Touches a deep meaning
- Stays with participants
- Evokes more questions
- “Travels well”—spreads into larger networks of conversation
3 Dimensions of Powerful Questions

**Construction**
- Linguistic construction of a question either opens our mind or narrows possibilities.
- Most powerful questions start with “how”, “what”, “why”* and are open-ended.

**Scope**
- Match the scope of the question to the needs of the group.
- Taylor the scope precisely—not to broad, not to narrow

**Assumptions**
- All questions have implicit or explicit assumptions.
- Check for assumptions or beliefs that may not be shared by participants.
What are the Assumptions and Beliefs?

1. How should we create a bilingual educational system in California?
2. How might we eliminate the border between the U.S. and Mexico?
3. What did we do wrong and who is responsible?
4. How can we compete with the Chinese companies?
When Framing Questions, Ask:

- Is this question relevant to the real life and real work of the people who will be exploring it?
- Is this a genuine question—a question to which we don’t know the answer?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking?
- What assumptions and beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?
- Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action and new possibilities rather than focus on past problems & obstacles?
- Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised?

(Adapted from Sally Ann Roth, Public Conversations Project, 1998)
4. Encourage Everyone’s Contribution

- Encourage and nurture conversation.
- Make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Use a talking object as needed.
- Ask follow up questions to clarify or help explore more deeply.
- Support participants as needed—to speak up or stay quiet.
- Model good listening.
- Use body language to convey interest and attention.
- Allow for silence.
5. Connect Diverse Perspectives

- Progressive “rounds” of conversations.
- As people move between tables, they “cross-pollinate” ideas.
- Participants write, doodle and draw on tablecloths making their thoughts visible.
- Participants build on, each other's ideas and add their own.
- Common patterns may arise.
Participants are encouraged to listen:

- to learn—notice own tendency to only partially listen
- for differences, surprises, challenges
- with support—linking and building on each other’s ideas
- for connections—listening together for collective wisdom and insights
- reflectively—pausing between comments to reflect and allow ideas to surface

6. Listen Together for Patterns & Insights
7. Share Collective Discoveries

- “Harvest” the ideas arising at table conversations into a pattern of the whole group.
- Invite participants to reflect and share discoveries and insights.
- Make the collective knowledge visible—graphic recorder, gallery tour, individual Post-its, idea clusters, story for a book or newspaper story, etc.
Desserts

- World Café Conversation
  - Purpose: to generate meaningful questions that will guide our exploration of ways to support and strengthen families and community; to identify ways to engage others in making positive change.
  - World Café conversation process.
  - Need a volunteer to be Table Host at each table.
  - We will practice 2 brief rounds of conversation.
  - Each round will be 10 minutes.
Round 1: What questions, if answered, would make the greatest difference in supporting and strengthening families and communities?

Round 2: What small (or big) changes can be made right now to engage more people in conversations that matter around these questions?
Take Outs

- Please complete the training evaluation.
- Inspirations and Connections
Thank you for your participation!