



The World Café



Clara Ballantine, SIA
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What is Our Experience?

- Have led or participated in a World Café process?
- Have read the book or attended a workshop?
- Have heard the term?
- This is new?



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What is The World Café?

- **The World Café** is an innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter.
- **Founded on the assumption** that people have the capacity to work together, no matter who they are.
- **Based on Appreciative Inquiry**, which focuses on what works, what brings life and vitality to an experience, what's possible for its evolution
- **The process works** – because people can work well together, can be creative and caring and insightful, when they're actively engaged in meaningful conversations around questions that count.
- **Used where** you need to harness the collective, creative thinking of a group around a challenging issue of common concern.



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History of The World Café

- Born in 1995 during a two-day dialogue among a global, interdisciplinary group known as the Intellectual Capital Pioneers.
- Impressed by the depth, scope, and innovative quality of their collaboration, they asked, “What happened here that supported such great conversation and breakthrough thinking?”
- Reflection on the (largely improvised) process, plus subsequent research and experimentation, resulted in the distillation of the World Café design principles and a sketch of “Café etiquette.”



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Fundamental Beliefs

- Humans want to talk together about things that matter to us
- As we talk together we are able to access a greater wisdom that is found only in the collective
- People have the capacity to work together *no matter who they are*



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Thoughts on the Power of Conversation

- True learning organizations are a space for generative conversations and concerted action which creates a field of alignment that produces tremendous power to invent new realities in conversation and to bring about these new realities in action.

- Fred Koffman and Peter Senge
“Communities of Commitment”
Organizational Dynamics



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- Leaders need to pose the questions and convene the conversations that invite others to become involved...In social systems...one good conversation can shift the direction of change forever.

- Linda Lambert and others
The Constructivist Leader



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- Conversations are the way workers discover what they know, share it with their colleagues and in the process create new knowledge for the organization. In the new economy, conversations are the most important form of work...so much so that the conversation is the organization.

- Alan Webber

“What’s So New About the New Economy?”

Harvard Business Review



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World Café Process



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Seven Design Principles

1. **Set the context:** clarify purpose and broad parameters for the dialogue
2. **Create hospitable space:** welcoming environment and psychological safety to nurture personal comfort and mutual respect
3. **Explore questions that matter:** powerful questions that attract collaborative engagement



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Seven Design Principles

4. **Encourage everyone's contribution:** invite full participation and mutual giving
5. **Cross pollinate and connect diverse perspectives:** emergence + common focus on core questions
6. **Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions**



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Seven Design Principles

7. **Harvest and share collective discoveries:**
make collective knowledge and insight visible
and actionable



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Assumptions

- Knowledge and wisdom are already present and accessible
- Intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in creative ways
- Collective insight evolves from ...
 - Honoring unique contributions
 - Connecting ideas
 - Listening fully
 - Noticing deeper patterns and questions

Etiquette

Focus on what matters...

- Contribute your thinking and experience
- Listen to understand
- Connect ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Have fun – doodle, draw, dream!



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Appreciative Inquiry Statements for Participants

- What I heard you say that I appreciated is...
- What I heard that challenged my thinking is...
- To better understand your perspective what I would like to ask you is...



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The World Cafe Process

- Same question at all tables
- Twenty minutes per question
- One person to act as table HOST
- One person to act as table RECORDER
- Change table and re-group
- Feedback to peers after third round
- Repeat with additional questions



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Café Roles

- **Host:** Remains at the table; summarizes the conversation to date as the next group joins the table; facilitates the continuing conversation
- **Recorder:** New each time. Records key points of the conversation on the flip chart so they can be shared later



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Our Process for Today

- Same question at all tables
- Ten minutes per question
- One person to act as table HOST
- One person to act as table RECORDER
- Change table and go to second question
- Feedback to peers after second round



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Springboard Statement

- “Professional practice excellence need not be sacrificed in the face of resource challenges; in fact, this very situation may be the catalyst for improvement in professional practice.”



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Question One

“What would it mean to take this perspective?”



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Question Two

“From this view, what is the most exciting possibility and the key question that arises for you?”



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Debrief

- Key points from each table
- Each table adds only what they have that is different from or builds upon what has already been said
- Flip chart pages collected and collated later



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The Power of the Question

- “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 less than five minutes.”

-Albert Einstein

- “ A paradigm shift occurs when a question is asked inside the current paradigm that can only be answered from outside it.”

-Marilee Goldberg,
The Art of the Question



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Characteristics of Powerful Questions

- “What question, if explored deeply, could give us real breakthrough?”
- Powerful questions:
 - Are simple and clear
 - Are thought provoking
 - Generate energy
 - Focus inquiry
 - Surface assumptions
 - Open new possibilities



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Framing Better Questions

- 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 I/we really don't know the answer?
- What “work” do I want this question to do? That is, what kind of conversation, meanings, and feelings do I imagine this question will evoke in those who will be exploring it?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking/feeling? Is it familiar enough to be recognizable and relevant—and different enough to call forward a new response?
- What assumptions or beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?
- Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action, and new possibilities or is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?
- Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?

*Adapted from Sally Ann Roth
Public Conversations Project c. 1998*



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Examples of Generative Questions

- “What would it mean to take this perspective?”
- “If organizations are networks of conversations, what does that mean for me and for my organization and community?”
- “From this view, what is the most exciting possibility and the key question that arises for you?”
- “What are all the issues and problems that need to be resolved over the next year to be an effective organization?”
- “What are the practical implications for your work or for your team?”

- From Workshop “Conversational Leadership”
Providence Care Annual Leadership Conference
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What is the next important conversation to have?



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Resources

- Books:

- *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook*, Cooperrider and Stavros 2003
- *Communities of Practice*, Wenger 1999
- *The World Café: A Resource Guide for Hosting Conversations That Matter*, 2002

- Websites:

- www.providencecare.ca
- www.berkana.org
- www.artofhosting.org
- www.theworldcafe.com



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Contact Information

Clara Ballantine, Safety and Improvement Advisor,
Quality Healthcare Network/ Safer Healthcare Now!
Ontario Node

Phone: 613-736-9142

E mail: clara.ballantine@qhn.ca



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