

## Conversation Café for Youth: The Roles

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**Welcomer:** Welcomes people and makes them feel comfortable. Begins by introducing self and sharing how it feels to talk in a group. Ask others to introduce themselves around the circle and say how it feels for them to talk in a group. Ask each person to read an **Agreement** and say what it means to them. Then asks the group if they can agree to these.

**Explainer:** Describes the **Rounds** and use of the *talking object*. Starts Rounds 1 and 2 by going first.

**Inviter:** States the topic or question for the **Conversation**. Starts the conversation by offering the *talking object* to someone who would like to begin. During the conversation, the **Inviter** may ask quiet people, *"Would someone who hasn't shared as much like to add something?"*

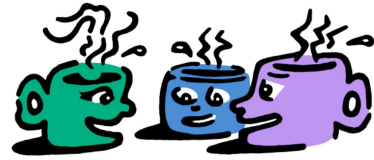
**Reminder:** Gently interrupts someone not following an **Agreement** by saying, *"Excuse me, but the agreement about \_\_\_\_\_ is being broken."* To signal that an agreement is being broken, the **Reminder** does not need to hold the talking object to interrupt. If unkind words are said, say, *"Let's take a moment of silence and think about what's happening."*

**Focuser:** Keeps the conversation moving by saying, *"Can someone say more about that?"* The **Focuser** can also keep the conversation on the topic by saying, *"Getting back to the topic, what hasn't been said about it yet?"* A few minutes before the final round needs to begin, the **Focuser** gives the group a signal by saying, *"There are 3 minutes before the final round begins, so what else can we say about this topic?"*

**Opposer:** During the conversation, the **Opposer** brings in opinions not being shared or asks questions such as *"Could the opposite of that be true?"* The **Opposer** starts the Final Round by saying, *"In this final round with the talking object, say what was interesting or important to you about this conversation. I will begin."* After speaking, the **Opposer** passes the talking object to the right around the circle.

## Conversation Café for Youth: Process & Agreements

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### INTRODUCTIONS:

**Welcomer** says name and how it feels to talk in a group. Then says, “Let’s go around the circle, saying your name and how it feels for you to talk in a group.”

### AGREEMENTS:

**Welcomer** passes out the **Agreements** and asks, “Would someone read the first one and say briefly what it means to you?” Repeat this process with each Agreement.

- **Open-mindedness:** Keep an open mind while you listen, and respect others because everyone is valuable.
- **Acceptance:** Remember, others may have different points of view, and you don’t have to decide if they are good or bad.
- **Curiosity:** Try to understand what others think and feel rather than proving you are right.
- **Discovery:** Ask questions if you need to be clearer about what was said.
- **Sincerity:** Speak about your own feelings and experiences.
- **Brevity:** Be honest but brief so that others have time to share.
- **Privacy:** Respect the conversation by not saying who said what

**Welcomer** asks, “Can we all agree to these?”

### PROCESS:

**Explainer** describes the process by saying, “This talking object is what you will hold while you are talking. People can only talk when they are holding it. We will go around the circle two times. If you are not ready to talk when the talking object comes around to you, you can say PASS. Then, we will just talk freely about the subject. We will end the conversation with a final round.” At any point during the conversation, if an Agreement is being broken, the **Reminder**, with or without the talking object, may gently interrupt.

### ROUND 1:

**Explainer** shows how to do the first round by saying, “One thought I have about (the topic) is...” The **Explainer** passes the *talking object* to their left for each person to complete the sentence.

### ROUND 2:

Again the **Explainer** goes first by completing the sentence, “One more thing I can say is...” and passes the talking object again around the circle.

### CONVERSATION:

**Inviter** states the topic or question for the conversation. **Inviter** holds the *talking object* and says, “Whoever would like to begin may take the talking object and speak. When you are finished, hold the talking object out for someone else to take.”

**Focuser** gives the group a signal by saying, *“The final round will begin in three minutes, so what is it that we haven’t said about this topic yet?”*

**FINAL ROUND:**

**Opposer** says, *“In this final round with the talking object, say what was interesting or important to you about this conversation. I will begin.”* After speaking, the **Opposer** passes the *talking object* to the right to go around the circle.

## Conversation Café for Youth: Convener's Directions



The Conversation Café model lends itself well to engaging youth in dialogue. The following modifications were inspired by Leslie Schneider and further developed by Jacquelyn Pogue and Sarah Jayne.

### DIRECTIONS:

The teacher or group leader serves as the **Convener**. They set the date, start/end time, topic for the conversation, and invite the participants.

### Preparation for the Event:

- Familiarize yourself with the Conversation Café method.
- Choose a topic or question for the conversation.
- Make copies for each participant of Role Descriptions and Process & Agreements.
- Ideal group size is six to eight. For each group, label six index cards each with one role: *Welcomer, Explainer, Inviter, Reminder, Focuser, Opposer*.
- Provide a talking object and timepiece for each group.
- Set out refreshments (optional).
- Arrange chairs in a circle (may also use a round table) for each group. Adjust temperature and lighting.

**Bring to Event:** handouts, labeled index cards, talking objects, timepieces, and writing tools

### The Event:

- Introduce self and welcome the participants. Have them sit in their small groups.
- Pass out the handouts to participants and a set of labeled index cards for each group.
- Describe the roles (refer to Roles handout). Have participants within each group volunteer to take a role. If necessary, ask, “*Who is willing to take the roles that are left over?*” The **Convener** can also take a role. Some people may take two roles. Each person takes their index card.
- Announce the topic or question and have participants write it in the **Process & Agreements** handout.
- Tell the **Focuser(s)** the time that the 3-minute signal should be announced. (*The 3-minute signal should take place about 10 minutes prior to the time the event is scheduled to end. This allows for approximately 3 minutes for finishing the Conversation, 4 minutes for the Final Round, and 3 minutes for feedback from the participants.*)
- **Welcomer(s)** begin the Conversation following the instructions in their handouts.

### Ending the Event:

- Ask for feedback on the topic and/or their experience of the conversation.
- Thank the participants.