



ncdd.org/conversationcafe

Conversation Cafés are open, hosted, drop-in conversations among people with diverse views and a shared passion for engaging with others. Held in public spaces like cafés, restaurants and bookstores, Conversation Cafés provide a safe setting for talking with neighbors about things that matter over a cup of coffee or tea.

Why Conversation Cafés? Because when you put strangers, caffeine and ideas in the same room, brilliant things can happen. Because people are tired of small talk and eager for BIG talk.

Shy? Just listen. Talkative and opinionated? Learn to listen. Willing to think, to question and to dream? Curious about what goes on in other people's heads? *That's* why.

What do we talk about? Brevity when talking and care when listening—plus a dash of compassion, respect and curiosity—can make anything food for great conversation. Building community. The good, true and beautiful. The news. Ethics. Friendship. War. Democracy. Politics. What questions are brewing in you? Bring them.

Conversation Cafés are a citizen initiative. Everyone is welcome. There's nothing to join. Anyone can come, just once or many times. There are no books to read, no assignments and no dues (except a bit to eat at the café).

Simple Agreements set the stage for the shift from small talk to BIG talk:
- Open-mindedness: Listen to and respect all points of view.

Want to talk with interesting people who...
...listen intently to what you have to say?
...can laugh, question, and exchange ideas?
...help you see your own next steps more clearly?
...care—about you, each other, and the world?

- Acceptance: Suspend judgement as best you can.
- Curiosity: Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- Discovery: Question assumptions, look for new insights.
- Sincerity: Speak from your heart and personal experience.
- Brevity: Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

What Happens at a Conversation Café? The host welcomes you, sets the theme for discussion, reviews the process and agreements, set an ending time, and calls for a moment of silence to relax, reflect, and become open.

Round one: Passing around the talking object (something symbolic or just handy that is held by the person speaking), each person speaks briefly to the topic. It's okay to pass. No feedback or response.

Round two: Again with talking object, each person briefly deepens their own comments or speaks to another's remarks.

Open, spirited conversation: Use the talking object only if there is domination, contention, or lack of focus. This will take up most of the time. Keep in mind the agreements.

Final Round: Each person says briefly what challenged, touched or inspired them. The host may request ideas for the next café's topic.

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