



World Café

Concept

The World Cafe is a process, a community and a set of values that help people host conversations that matter.

Since its inception in 1995, tens of thousands of people all over the globe have participated in World Cafe dialogue in settings ranging from crowded hotel ballrooms to cozy living rooms. It's a simple yet powerful method for creating meaningful and cooperative dialogue around questions participants perceive to truly matter. **Juanita Brown**, together with **David Isaacs** and the World Cafe Community have created a book: *The World Cafe: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* and further explain their work on the website: www.theworldcafe.com. It was born out of worldwide interest in dialogue methodologies and based on the idea: If you can change the conversation, you can change the future. It's all about how human beings talk with one another and engage in speaking and listening from their hearts. It is not only an easily learned process (tables of four, hosts that welcome new folks into the conversation as people move from table to table, threading conversations deeper and deeper) for sharing world views, but also a tool that creates the context for collective action. Tom Atlee, author of *The Tao of Democracy* and founder of the Co-Intelligence Institute says "The World Cafe is a creative dance of conversations and questions..it is a midwifery gift to a future struggling to be born."

The World Cafe has sprung from the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges that lie before us today. Invite people to sit down and talk. And watch what happens. The World Cafe is both a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue and a metaphor for noticing how we are already co-evolving our future together.

Principles

There are some fundamental [principles](#) that underpin The World Cafe. If you're thinking of hosting a cafe conversation, you might find what the authors call "Seven Core Design Principles" of interest:

1. Set the context: clarify your purpose: Ask "What conversation, if begun today, could ripple out in a way that creates new possibilities for the future of whatever you are presently exploring?" Determine the right participants: the diversity of the group matters; diverse views produce richer contributions. The intention of Cafe conversations is to collectively seek possibilities and share learning by mixing levels and perspectives. There is no pressure to expect immediate results; therefore, participants find themselves more able to share their best thinking around critical questions and to generate innovative possibilities for action.



2. Create a hospitable environment: think of ways to create a safe, inviting, life-serving and welcoming space. Smaller tables, for instance, facilitate more connection. Flowers, food and music might help a great deal.
3. Explore questions that matter: if you focus the collective attention on powerful questions that truly matter to those present, you will attract collaborative engagement.
4. Encourage everyone's contribution: with tables of four people, no one can "hide," so everyone is heard; respect each person present, and invite full participation and mutual giving.
5. Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives: gather together people who will bring a wide range of perspectives and then retain a common focus on core questions.
6. Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions: Focus shared attention in ways that nurture coherence of thought without losing individual contributions.
7. Harvest and share collective discoveries: this can be done in various ways from writing on paper table cloths to having someone diagram collective ideas on the wall. However you choose to do it, including sitting in a larger circle later, invite the collective intelligence to emerge and make it visible as well as actionable and meaningful.