

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS

Context

Purpose

- Improve Decision making
- Gain a better understanding of a complex issue
- Connect people and build relationships
- Solve Problems
- Share Knowledge and learn from each other
- Generate ideas
- Surface hidden problems
- Surface opportunities (Gurteen)

Values

- Valid information
- Free and informed choice
- Internal commitment to that choice (Argyris)
- Psychological Safety (Edmondson)
 - Reliability
 - Integrity and Kindness
 - Capability

Awareness

- Of self (needs, interests, intent)
- Of others (needs, interests, intent)
- Of process (what is happening in the group) (Hovell)

Self

Individual Responsibilities

- Turn taking (helping others get in)
- Listening
 - Rephrase the statement of another to check for understanding
 - Express appreciation of others' comments (verbal or non verbal)
- Check that a topic is finished before offering a new topic
- Offer my view (using "I" statements (what I hold as truth based on experience, reading, science, and/or faith)
- Provide my reasoning (Why I believe my view is accurate, how I came to my view)
- And ask questions to check if my own reasoning is flawed or missing something (Inquiry)
- Test assumptions I am making about others (Inquiry)
- Test assumptions others appear to be making about me (Inquiry) (Argyris)
- Ask generative questions (Bushe)
- Summarize the conversation periodically
- Make requests
 - For agreement
 - For action
- Make Commitments (a pledge to do something)
- Act in ways that make the conversation psychologically safe (Edmondson)

Design

Facilitation Responsibilities

- Connection before content (Block)
- The small group as the unit of learning
 - Small group to learn
 - Large group to integrate learning
- We learn when we talk (Johnson & Johnson)
 - Enable all voices to be heard
- Diverge before converging
- Encourage dissenting views (Weisbord)
- Physical space changes the conversation
 - circles connect
 - Configuration of chairs, tables, screens
 - Lighting, windows
 - Space for coffee, etc.
 - Within or outside the office
 - Welcoming, pictures, comfort. (Dixon)

Organization Leadership Responsibilities

Establish the Meeting

- Identify complex challenges the organization is facing
- Frame conversations – so they are open to innovation
- Provide transparency –political, strategic, finance
- Language the invitation as attendance by choice
- Take the role of participant – give the work to the group (Heifetz)

Encourage Psychological Safety

- Acknowledge own lack of knowledge about a topic
- Acknowledge the complexity of the issue (Edmondson)