

Resources to Assist Consultation Interaction (Adaptable to Evaluation)

The following are not listed in any order of priority. They share fundamental qualities that are useful for consultation experiences: They recognize the importance of human engagement, listening to one another, respecting the ideas and experiences of participants in the process, releasing the creativity of people, giving people a voice in development and idea sharing, evaluating using criteria all have had a part in developing.

Stimulating Conversation: The World Café¹

The World Café is a hospitable space to explore questions that matter. The process encourages broad contributions from the team, connecting of diverse perspectives, listening and sharing collective discoveries with a view to responsible action. The World Café design incorporates *focused dialogue around substantive questions, shared stories, and case studies; a structured inquiry task; and one or more plenary sessions for synthesis and decision-making*. In the rounds of dialogue, ideas build on one another while participants explore questions and issues that matter to them in their life and work. Though possible outcomes are often identified, conversations are not focused, at least initially, on finding solutions. The more important outcome, and one that happens best in conversation, is to discover suitable questions to ask in relation to an issue. Though not necessary, some have found it helpful to have a focusing presentation prior to the three rounds of conversation. In plenary session(s), after the rounds of conversation, connections among ideas are explored and questions are clarified. Knowledge-sharing, possibilities for further inquiry, and opportunities for research and action may emerge.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Rather than look for problems or weaknesses, look for what is working, or what has promise. Recognize the creative capacity of people to reflect on current realities in light of an imagined future; to capture the life-giving elements of the past to energize the present and the future. Key to AI is the formation of significant questions.² Cooperrider and Whitney suggest that human systems grow in the direction of that about which they persistently ask questions.³ Therefore, inquiry is encouraged and time allowed for people to talk together and explore ideas.

¹See Juanita Brown with David Isaacs. *The World Café Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005).

² Juanita Brown (*The World Café*, 91) tells the story of two different approaches to asking questions in a community development effort: The less dynamic question was “Have you thought about cleaning up the river?” Apart from being the generally unproductive yes/no form, the question would not take the people to useful thinking that leads to action. In this case, the more useful questions were, “What do you see when you look at the river? How do you feel about the condition of the river? How do you explain the situation with the river to your children?” This approach is more risky for the community development specialist because it leaves open the possibility that the people will see the problem (and hence possible solutions) differently. But, the reality is that it is most often the people who live with the situation who can see the way through the problem more clearly. The advantage of an outsider’s perspective, of course, is when the insider has been blindsided by bias, tradition, or familiarity.

³ See David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney. *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom. *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change*. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003)

Looking Differently at our Problems

The way we talk about a problem or situation is part of the problem. Part of the solution is to talk about it differently. Name two or three of the most frequently talked about problems in relation to the theme of this consultation.

- What assumptions are present in the way the problems are discussed?
- How might you talk about these problems differently?
- Does thinking differently allow you to view the situation differently?

Case Examples

Ask participants to write a brief case example that reflects the issue addressed by the consultation. Discuss the examples, looking for patterns and reflecting on action. In the process people are often able to identify blockages. Use thought questions rather than yes/no questions. For example, What do you perceive happened in this situation? Why? How is this situation or problem similar or different from other situations or problems? What do you want to start doing, stop doing, continue doing? What went well, what didn't work? What happened? Why? What will we do differently next time?

Concluding Options for the Consultation: Stewarding Our Conversations

- In what ways will you continue and expand the conversations that took place at this Consultation? With whom? How?
- Suggest one or more concrete ideas for a partnership with (name the relevant organizations or groups).
- In what ways can participants continue productive conversations about important matters raised in this consultation?
- How many different ways can you suggest for collaboration—how might we help?
- In what ways can ideas or findings from this consultation be disseminated in your communities? What are you willing to do to help disseminate findings—to whom and for what purpose? How might we help? Who might you contact to share ideas and insights from your work at this Consultation?
- What potentially fundable issue and/or project derived from the work at the Consultation could you suggest?

Sharing Questions

Use one or more of the following to stimulate personal reflection on experience with one or more of the themes:

- Tell at least one story from your ministry that illustrates questions or doubts or particular feelings about this theme.
- Describe an event or realization related to this theme that caused your desire to pass on something of worth to others in your context.
- Tell us of a time when you were conscious of being significantly influenced by someone else in relation to this theme?
- What support, training, or coaching in relation to this theme do you wish you had in the early years of your ministry?

Rank Order

Put the situations we have been discussing in order from the least to most comfortable for you. Explain your choices.

Private Reflection

Reflect on the following questions privately:

- How does this theme make me *feel*?
- What do I *think* about the basic premises behind this theme?
- What do my reactions to the theme tell me about *myself*? About others? About *God*?
- What, if anything, does our work on this theme make me want *to do*?

Following Through After Work and/or a Discussion⁴

1. To follow through on ideas.
 - What will happen now?
 - Who is or was affected?
 - What problems could arise?
 - What are the positive and negative consequences?
 - What factors might have changed the outcome?
2. To summarize at the end of a session.
 - What were the main points of our conversation/work?
 - What are the most important results of our session?
 - What still needs to be considered?
3. To identify examples or analogies.
 - What else is this like?

Response After a Period of Conversation/Discussion⁵

In light of our conversations today, respond to the following questions. Use the sheets of paper and markers at your table to record your ideas.

- If there was one thing that hasn't yet been explored but is necessary in order to reach a deeper level of understanding or clarity, what would that be?
- What requires further thought before we can commit to action?
- What action(s) are we ready to take in the next 3-4 months? Describe 1-2 essential steps in relation to the action(s).
- What will require our immediate attention as we move toward our next steps?

Note-Taking Pairs

As you begin the session, ask participants to work in pairs to synthesize information from their notes and/or observations during the specialist's or scholar's presentation. Alternatively, ask them to create an improved collective version of their individual notes.

⁴Adapted from Kenneth Chuska. *Improving Classroom Questions*. (Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1995, 2003).

⁵Adapted from the *World Café*

Send-a-Problem/Question

Place a substantive question or a concisely written problem underlying the theme in envelopes—enough to give one envelope to each sub group in your work group. Form subgroups of 3-4 and give one envelope to each. Each group is to discuss the question or problem, generate possible responses, and record their best response on a 3x5 card and place it in the envelope. Call time and instruct the groups to pass their envelope to the next group. Repeat as often as you have number of groups. Each group considers the responses of the previous groups in their conversation, refining and improving upon their original response—and adding another 3x5 card to the envelope each time. At the end of the activity, discuss the final responses and determine what might be of value to the work of the consultation.

Concept formation

A neglected task in critical thinking is the intentional linking of ideas to other ideas. Conceptual mapping (or concept webbing) is a commonly used exercise to help sharpen this skill. Provide a large sheet of paper or access to a whiteboard. Identify one essential and central concept that has emerged from the conversation about your theme. Using this concept as the starting point, create a ‘conceptual map’ that shows *graphically* how the starting concept links to other concepts. Typically, the starter concept will be printed in the middle of the paper or whiteboard. From this starting point you extend lines out to other related concepts. Your graphic can take a hub and spokes form, a web, a spiral, and so on. Once you have completed your conceptual map, examine it for inconsistencies, implications, gaps, insights, and so on. What has your conceptual map added to your understanding of the theme? What action steps are suggested?

Dear Diary, today I

Give each participant a sheet of paper. Ask them to think of an incident related to your theme. They are to imagine that the incident happened that day and they are now, in the evening of that day, writing a diary entry that captures their thoughts and feelings about the incident. “Dear Diary, today I

Brief Encounters: Facilitator’s Guide (Time required: 30-40 minutes)

Adapted from a Peace Corps Experience by Andrea MacGregor. Numerous commercially developed simulation games are available. Some may be adaptable to the theme of the consultation.

Introduction

- Everyone has a culture. It shapes how we see ourselves, others, and the world.
- Behavior is affected in large part by cultural beliefs and values.
- Culture is like an iceberg. Some aspects are visible; others are beneath the surface. Invisible aspects influence and cause the visible ones.

In *Brief Encounters* participants explore the interaction of two cultures—one outgoing and casual, the other more reserved and formal—with different social norms. Cultural-norms sheets (see below) have been created for the Panya and Chispa cultures

Instructions

1. Print sufficient cultural-norm sheets for the Panya and Chispa cultures (see below). About half the large group will be Panya, the other half Chispa.
2. Remove all furniture from the center of the room. Explain to participants that they will adopt the cultures of two unfamiliar groups, interact with each other, and then examine their reactions.

3. Divide the participants into Panya and Chispa groups. The groups should be about the same size, balanced for gender as much as possible, and diverse in terms of ethnicity or other group factors. Give the two cultures the following instructions:
 - Seek out members of your own and the other “culture.” (You may not avoid interaction with the other “culture.” You must try to engage.)
 - Attempt to engage members of your or the other “culture” (suggest 2-3 questions that are relevant to the purpose of the consultation).
4. Select a group of about 4-6 to serve as observers. The observers are to watch closely as the Panyas and the Chispas interact. They may move among the participants, but they may not touch or speak to them. They will provide observations during debriefing.
5. Send the Panya and Chispa groups to opposite corners of the room. Give each group a copy of their cultural norm description. Ask the members of each culture to become as familiar as possible with their particular characteristics and behavior.
6. Have one of the observers visit the Panya group to emphasize the importance of staying in character, that males in their culture should be chaperoned at all times. Remind them of the Panyas’ reserved behavior and their reluctance to initiate contacts with people of other cultures.
7. One of the observers visits the Chispas and emphasizes the importance of staying in character, and that members of this culture make several brief contacts rather than a few lengthy ones. Define a ‘contact’ as eliciting a verbal or a nonverbal response from a member of the other culture. Remind them of their friendly, outgoing nature and their eagerness to meet people from other cultures.

The Simulation

1. Announce that two groups from imaginary countries have been invited to a party sponsored by an international organization. The party organizers hope the two groups will get acquainted and learn about each other. Introduce the cultures as Panyas and Chispas providing no more information about their respective characteristics. Invite the groups to interact (if desired, play background music).
2. The observers should walk among the groups, looking for behaviors that can be described and discussed during debriefing. After 10 to 12 minutes, call time and end the party. Each culture group returns to their respective corners to discuss what they learned. Observers meet to compare notes.
3. Give each group about 10 minutes to prepare their observations. The Chispas’ report will describe Panya behavior and the values that people could expect to encounter if they visited the Panya nation. The Panyas will create a similar description of the Chispas’ culture.

Debriefing

Use questions such as the following to guide discussion of how our own cultural biases influence the way we view other groups. Be sure to ask the small group of observers for their views on the participants’ attempts to communicate across cultures and to maintain cultural norms.

1. How did you feel about the behavior of the members of your own group? Of the other group? Did your group’s report use positive, negative, or neutral terms to describe the other group?
2. Ask participants to discuss whether or not they agree with each of the following statements:
 - People have difficulty describing the behaviors of other groups in non-judgmental terms.
 - People acquire cultural norms fairly quickly.
 - Most cultural norms are maintained through peer pressure.
 - The same or similar behavior can be perceived differently depending on one’s group norms. For example, what appears friendly to Chispas seems pushy to Panyas.
3. What real-world situations were illustrated during the Brief Encounter?

4. What lessons from this activity would you want to keep in mind if you were going to spend time with people from an unfamiliar culture?

Panya Cultural Norms

- Panyas are reserved and do not initiate conversation; speaking only when spoken to.
- Panyas have formal speech patterns, using “sir” and “ma’am” or other titles.
- Panya women have more status than men. Men are chaperoned by Panya women.
- Panya men avoid eye contact and respond through their chaperones.
- Panya men do not speak directly with women from other cultures.
- Panya men can talk to men from other cultures. They can maintain eye contact with men from other cultures.

Chispa Cultural Norms

- Chispas are informal and friendly.
- Among Chispas there are no gender roles. Men and women behave the same way.
- Chispas are outgoing. They love to make contact with people from other cultures.
- Chispa contacts are brief and casual. A response is elicited and the Chispa person moves on.
- Chispas are democratic and call everyone by his or her first name.
- Chispas value cross-gender contacts more than same-gender contacts.

The following exercises are adapted from Stephen Brookfield. *Teaching for Critical Thinking*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012).

Closing Reflection

At what moment were you most engaged as a participant?

At what moment were you most distanced as a participant?

What action that anyone took in the group did you find most helpful?

What action that anyone took in the group did you find most confusing?

What surprised you most about the group?

Circle of Voices

In the first round, no one interrupts the speaker. Then the person to his/her left speaks for about a minute—but is required to incorporate elements of the first speaker’s comments into his/her remarks using them as a springboard for her/his comments. This process continues around the circle, with every speaker responding to the immediately preceding speaker’s comments. The circle ends with the

first speaker, who responds to the immediately preceding speaker's comments as well. Following the cycle, the group can engage in open conversation—seeking clarification, asking questions, making additional contributions.

Structured Silence

Every 15-20 minutes call for 2-3 minutes of intentional silence—a reflective pause. Participants are asked to think quietly about one of the following questions (different questions chosen by the facilitator for each pause):

- What was the most important point made in the last 15-20 minutes?
- What was the most puzzling or confusing point made in the last 15-20 minutes?
- What question do we most need to address in the next period of our discussion?
- What new perspective or interpretation was suggested for you in the last 15-20 minutes?
- What assumptions that you hold about this topic were confirmed in the last 15-20 minutes?
- What assumptions that you hold about this topic were challenged in the last 15-20 minutes?

Give participants 3-5 cards to keep track of ideas or insights. Invite response before proceeding with the discussion.

The Appreciative Pause

At least once in every discussion, the facilitator calls for a pause of about 1-2 minutes. During this time the only comments allowed are from participants who acknowledge how something said by another participant contributed to their learning.

- A question that was asked that suggested a new way of thinking.
- A comment that clarified something that until then was confusing.
- A comment that opened up a new line of thought.
- A comment that helped to identify an assumption.
- A comment that identified a gap in reasoning that needed to be addressed.
- A comment that is intriguing and had not been considered before.
- A comment showing the connection between two other ideas or contributions when that connection hadn't been clear.
- An example that was provided that helped increase understanding of a difficult concept.

To Generate Multiple Perspectives

- “Let’s look at this issue and start with a different premise. For example...”
- “What would this issue look like if we began from a different starting point?”
- “Try to imagine you have no experience with this matter. Where would your instinct tell you to start?”
- “Try to think of the most unlikely ways of understanding this matter—the weirder the better. What would they be?”
- “Who or what perspective is missing and what would it look like if that perspective was included?”
- “What radically different examples can you give of this theme? In what different directions could these examples take our analysis?”
- “What questions or issues have been raised for us today? What remains unresolved or contentious about this issue?”