

The Co-Intelligence Institute [CII home](#)

The World Cafe

*The World Cafe refers to both a vision and a method of dialogue.
It evolved out of conversations and experimentation one day
at the home of consultants Juanita Brown and David Isaacs.*

World Café Conversations are an intentional way to create a living network of conversation around questions that matter. A Café Conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes.

The challenges of life in the 21st Century require us to find new ways to access the wisdom and intelligence inherent in groups both small and large. The need for collaboration, insight and coordinated action has never been greater. Café Conversations are one way that communities, businesses, governments, and people from all walks of life are using to create a common purpose, share knowledge, make more intelligent decisions, and call forth life-affirming action together.

The methodology of the World Café is simple: The environment is set up like a café, with tables for four, tablecloths covered by paper tablecloths, flowers, some colored pens and, if possible, candles, quiet music and refreshments. People sit four to a table and have a series of conversational rounds lasting from 20 to 45 minutes about one or more questions which are personally meaningful to them. At the end of each round, one person remains at each table as the host, while each of the other three travel to separate tables. Table hosts welcome newcomers to their tables and share the essence of that table's conversation so far. The newcomers relate any conversational threads which they are carrying -- and then the conversation continues, deepening as the round progresses. At the end of the second round, participants return to their original table -- or move on to other tables for one or more additional rounds -- depending on the design of the Café. In subsequent rounds they may explore a new question or go deeper into the original one. After three or more rounds, the whole group gathers to share and explore emerging themes, insights, and learnings, which are captured on flipcharts or other means for making the collective intelligence of the whole group visible to everyone so they can reflect on what is emerging in the room. At this point the Café may end or it may begin further rounds of conversational exploration and inquiry.

In World Café, the formulation of powerful questions is a fundamental art and skill. Questions like "What's important to you about this situation, and why do you care?" and "What are we not seeing (or talking about) that is vital to our progress?" can open up new possibilities and energy. If you (as planner or host) don't know what question(s) are right for a particular Café, you can ask as a first round question "What question, if answered, could make the greatest difference to the future of the situation we're exploring here?"

The seven design principles of World Café are:

- Set the context

- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage everyone's contribution
- Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
- Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions
- Harvest and share collective discoveries

There is much to know about each of these principles -- wisdom that is contained in a remarkable book on the subject -- *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* by Juanita Brown with David Isaacs and the World Café Community (Berrett-Koehler, 2005). Read Tom Atlee's review of it [here](#).

For more info see

[More on World Cafe....](#)

[The World Cafe website](#)

[The old CII World Cafe pages](#)