

World (and passion) Café



Brief description of the activity

World (and passion) Café is a simple and non-formal way to have different people talking together in different languages and in different tables on certain topics.

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Objectives:

The objective of this activity is to facilitate the contact between different people through the practice of different languages and the addressing of different topics.

The activity, based on the World Café methodology (<http://www.theworldcafe.com/>), uses the non-formal setting of aggregation to allow different people to discuss on different topics or in different languages.

The World Café method is designed to create a safe, welcoming environment in which to intentionally connect multiple ideas and perspectives by engaging participants in several rounds of small-group conversation.

Methodology:

The methodology used is to create a non-formal context, modelled after a café, in which participants can choose the table representing the language, the culture or the topic they want to explore.

The activity has not so much an educational purpose, but rather it aims at connecting different people enhancing the exchange of ideas and thoughts between them, in a safe and welcoming intercultural space.

It is possible to use the methodology of the World Café also to discuss about certain pre-determined topics. However it must be clear that the aim of the activity is not so much to focus on specific topics, but, by setting topics, the process of exchange is facilitated and participants create relations with each other.

The methodology used implies a combination of these three methods in order to reach the objective of the exercise:

- Ice-breaking activity
- World café
- Debriefing

Ice - breaking activity: This first activity is crucial because it allows participants to have a first approach and to get to know each other. This activity encourages participants to talk to each other, even those who can be frightened by language barriers that can exist in an intercultural context. It stimulates participants to find other forms of non-verbal or meta-verbal expression, in which communication is not solely related to the delivery of contents but also a tool to create relations and to know other people and other cultures. To do this, a game is presented to ease mutual acquaintance through a multi-code communication.

World café This part is where spontaneous aggregation occurs. Just like the methodology of world café, participants will be invited either to join a table or to create one, according to their own interests. It is not important to set a common language, or to get new language skills (even though it is a relevant positive side effect of the activity). The conversations can happen in whatever way and language the participants want to, as long as they feel free to discuss about topics and share ideas or opinions with others.

Debriefing: After the activity, it is important to have a moment with all the participants together to share the experience with the group.

The objective of this part is to allow to everyone to express their feelings and opinions on the discussions emerged during the previous phase and to encourage the group to plan together a new “edition” of the activity starting from what emerged during this one. The debriefing phase itself is intended to help participants to assess these “results” and to re-conceptualize them for a participatory planning of new World café.

Duration:

The activity should preferably take place in the evening, during the aperitif time. It should last at least two hours, and it can be a single event or, even better, it can be a recurring event, a weekly appointment in which participants have the opportunity to experiment with different tables and different languages. In the case of recurring event, it is advisable to set the topics for the next appointment together in group, during the debriefing phase.

Location:

The choice of location for this activity is crucial, since it should have all the characteristics of a Café. Hence, it is possible to organize it indoor or outdoor, by modelling the venue with tables, chairs, flowers etc.. and the possibility of having a small aperitif with drinks and snacks, as long as the non-formal environment and atmosphere of a gathering place can be ensured. It can also take place in an actual Café.

Materials:

- Tables (according to the number of participants expected)
- Chairs (according to the number of participants expected)
- Drinks
- Snacks
- Paper, markers, sticks, tape to create little table flags (related to the nationalities of /language spoken by the participants, or to specific topics)
- Music (additional)
- A little bell

Staff needed and eventual specific skills required:

No particular skills are required.

Participants involved:

The activity does not fit with monocultural/monolingual group of participants (it is advisable to have at least three different

nationalities represented/ languages spoken) and of course the success of the activity increases with the heterogeneity of the group.

Young people can be mingled up with adults as long as they can connect through common interests. The activity can be done even with children, but, in this case, it is advisable to have less extended age groups. The conversation topic suggested should then be prepared consequently, in order to fit with the target groups.

(i.e. the topic for children will be different from those for young people or adults)

Aperitif: this part is where spontaneous aggregation occurs. Once the location is set up, participants are just invited to join the tables choosing spontaneously the one with the flag they feel more inspired by. This phase should be very informal, the facilitator should encourage the participants to join different tables. The participants are free to join more than one table, passing from one to another and talking to differ-

ent people in different languages.

In this phase it is important to support the participants to express themselves and not to feel uncomfortable if they don't speak fluently another language, but to try to encourage them to feel free to try new ways of communication, based on interaction.

Steps:

Before – The preparation of the activity

Before starting the activity, it is necessary to create a welcoming environment, modelled after a café, with tables and chairs, a non-formal environment that stimulates relationships and cooperation (the amount of chairs and tables are set depending on the number of participants).

Set a table with some flags (prepared in advance) of either nationalities or symbols representing certain topics (i.e. a football ball referred to Sports, a musical note referred to Music, a brush referred to Arts etc..). Make sure to let some blank flags and to provide markers, to allow participants to draw something that represents their own topic of interest.

Prepare a small aperitif buffet, with drinks and some snacks.

The venue should be as informal as possible, and - in case you decide to run the activity in a place different from your youth center – take into account religious beliefs and cultural habits as they may make someone feel less comfortable than others if you pick certain locations (ex. bar mainly frequented by men, places that serve alcohol, conflictive neighbourhood...).

During

1. Ice - breaking activity

This first activity is crucial because it allows participants to have a first approach and to get to know each other, trying to overcome the linguistic barriers.

Provide the participants with paper and markers and explain them the exercise.

Assign each participant 5 minutes to invent an advertisement for a mysterious object. They can use drawings, mimic and whatever they feel necessary. Once ready, they have 2 minutes to advertise a product they

want to “sell” to the audience. The advertisement, (i.e. slogans, features of the object, price...) must be done in their own language and other participants have to guess the “mysterious” object.

Invite the participants to also use dialects or regionalisms and to be creative in using non-verbal language or metalanguage.

2. World café

After the first activity, invite the participants to have a snack or a drink, so to encourage spontaneous conversations among them. This part is where spontaneous aggregation occurs. Once the location is set up, participants are just invited to join the tables choosing spontaneously the one with the flag they feel more inspired by. This phase should be very informal, the facilitator should encourage the participants to join different tables. The participants are free to join more than one table, passing from one to another and talking to different people in different languages.

In this phase it is important to support the participants to express themselves and not to feel uncomfortable if they don't speak fluently another language, but to try to encourage them to feel free to try new ways of communication, based on interaction.

Show participants the little flags, explaining that they represent the topic or the language of discussion at their table. Ask then them to pick one flag and sit at an empty table, or to join a table “created” by someone else. They can also create their own topic, by drawing on an empty flag. No participant should stay without a table.

Make sure that each table has a certain number of participants attending (minimum 2). This phase should not be rushed in order that the personal time of different people to decide which topic/language (and, as an extension, culture) to explore first is respected.

Where possible, play some low ambient music. It al-

lows to create the ideal environment and to fill the void, so that everyone can feel more relaxed and less “observed” while approaching something out of their comfort-zone. Mention the possibility to change table in order to get to know more people, languages and cultures, as if it was a “speed date”. The facilitator can also use a bell to warn participants when they can change table.

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Ring the bell every 10 minutes, telling the participants that they can autonomously decide if they want to stay longer at that table and continue the conversation, or change it, in order to explore different topics or different languages. This way, one can have the chance to change table according to rules, with no risk of being misinterpreted or hurting feelings of the other people at the table.

If someone is enjoying the conversation, don't push him/her to change table, just encourage those who are not involved to try different tables and languages, even

by joining already started conversations.

After

Debriefing:

After the activity, it is important to have a moment with all the participants together to share the experience with the group.

The objective of this part is to allow everyone to express their feelings and opinions on the discussions during the Aperitif phase.

The participants can share with the group how they felt during the experience, what difficulties they faced, what were the strengths, and possibly what they have learned.

Talking to different people from different cultures can help one to overcome certain prejudices and to find some common ground, because the informal relationship stimulates trust and empathy.

The debriefing phase must be guided in an open discussion, in which everyone feels safe and free to express his opinion, without imposing it on others, and without judging.

The discussion can also take place spontaneously. In this case the facilitator must make sure that everyone respects their turn and that everyone is listened to.

Is it possible to conduct the debriefing discussion through a series of targeted questions. Choose the ones you think are more appropriate to the context.

1. Overall experience

- How did the experience go?
- Did you choose a topic or join a table?
- Were you interested in the topics prepared or did you create a new topic?

2. The group

- How many times did you change table?
- How was the relationship with other participants?
- Have you learned anything funny/curious/unexpected about them?
- How did you communicate while on the table?

3. The participants

- How did you behave with the other participants?
- What did you think during the activity?
- What were your fears towards this experience?
- And what were your hopes instead?

4. Future

- What have you learnt from this experience?
- How is your connection with other participants now?

- How could we organize the next world café?

Do's and don'ts

Because of its features, the activity could also take place in an actual Café or cafeteria. You can make an arrangement with a local café and bring the group there if you think the environment fits better the purpose of the activity.

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Do not give the activity a structure that is too rigid, just ensure a relaxed environment in which participants can feel free to express themselves.

