



# EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

## Conversation Café Protocol

### Agreements for a Great Conversation

- **Open-mindedness:** listen to and respect all points of view
- **Acceptance:** suspend judgment as best you can
- **Curiosity:** seek to understand rather than persuade
- **Discovery:** question old assumptions, look for new insights
- **Sincerity:** speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning
- **Brevity:** go for honesty and depth, but don't go on and on

### Conversation Café Process

**Preparation:** The host will have nametags, paper and pencil (for note-taking), an object (something symbolic or just handy) that is held by the person speaking, and optionally a centerpiece (a Conversation Café table tent or a mini checkered table cloth for quick identification, or a candle, flower, etc.).

**Welcome:** The host welcomes everyone, states the theme for the café, reads the agreements, sets an ending time, and maybe calls for a moment of silence to relax, reflect and become open.

**Round one:** Each person speaks in turn, going around the circle once. Each person holds the talking object while they speak. During this round, everyone says their name and speaks briefly about what is on their minds regarding the theme. Anyone may pass if they don't want to speak. Everyone is asked to express themselves fully yet succinctly, allowing time for others to speak. No feedback or response.

**Round two:** Now that everyone has been introduced, the group goes around the circle again. If someone wants to respond to another's remarks, they can do so in their own turn. Each person holds the talking object. To allow more time for conversation, keep remarks brief, possibly just naming the theme or subjects you want to delve into more deeply. Again, no feedback or response.

**Spirited Dialogue:** Now the conversation opens up and people can speak in no particular order. This conversation will take up most of the time. If there is domination, contention, or lack of focus, the host may suggest that the group again use the talking object. Keep in mind the agreements.

**Closing:** A few minutes before the end of the Café, the host will ask everyone to go around the circle again, giving each a chance to say briefly what they are taking away from the conversation.