



Tired of small talk?
Try some BIG talk!

Come to a Conversation Café

[Why should I talk to strangers?](#)

[What difference will it make?](#)

[What is a Conversation Café?](#)

[Why this, why now?](#)

[But I want to DO something!](#)

Why should I talk to strangers?

Sure, it's easier to watch TV. It's easier to keep your lips buttoned and stick to your routines. Sure, it's risky to talk to people you don't know. You have no idea how they will react. Sure it's hard to walk in to a public place, looking for people you don't recognize who might be really different from you. Sure, you might be smarter than everyone and be bored. Sure you might be dumber and be embarrassed.

Sure. Sure.

But your mind is such a beautiful thing. It would be a shame to waste it.

Talk to strangers at a Conversation Café and you just might find people who...

- Listen intently to what you have to say
- Can laugh, question, and engage in friendly debate
- Help you see your own next steps more clearly
- Care—about you, each other, and the world

Talk to strangers. We dare you.

Talk to strangers?

Yes, it's easy at

Conversation Cafés. You don't have to be 'in the know.' You don't have to read a book. You don't have to join an organization. You don't even have to think up a good opening line. Skilled hosts lead you through a simple process that helps you shift from small talk to BIG talk and discover the magic of great conversation. No committees will be formed.

HOW A CAFÉ WORKS:

Read about the process and agreements for good conversation.



A place is saved for you at the table!

In the founders words:

Read a story about an early café!

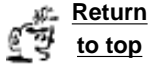
Join us:

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"Creating a positive future begins in human conversation.

The simplest and most powerful investment any member of a community or an organization may make in renewal is to begin talking with other people as though the answers mattered."

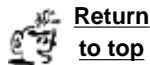
--William Greider,
adapted from *Who Will Tell the People*



What difference will it make if I talk to strangers?

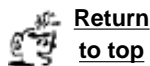
Normally Americans seem strangely reluctant to talk about things that matter with people they don't know. Walk into a café and you'll see one person per table. Other countries have lively cultures of conversation — and thus are better able as a people to know what they think. Here we rely on the commercial media and poorly constructed polls to tell us what's on our minds and in our hearts.

Talking with one another could be the most radical and healing act we do. At times of crisis—like now, since September 11, 2001—we DO want to connect with each other. Strangers everywhere ARE talking. It's only habit and custom that keep us apart, not a natural disinterest or fear. Perhaps, in the process of listening and conversing, we'll open our minds a bit. Maybe even change them. And that's healthy. We need an engaged populace in a robust, sustained, reasonable process of learning to safely make it through this time.



What is a Conversation Café?

It is a one-and-a-half hour hosted conversation, held in a public setting like a café, where anyone is welcome to join. A simple format helps people feel at ease and gives everyone who wants it a chance to speak. At Conversation Cafés, everyone is "the talk show"—and it's also fine for people to simply listen.



Why this, why now?

Learning. In times of crisis—be it earthquakes, terrorist attacks, war, layoffs, recessions—people overcome their fear of strangers. We recognize that we are all in this—whatever this is—together. We see how vulnerable we all are, citizens and leaders alike. If we are brave, we even see that something so new is happening that we don't know how to cope. What do you do when you don't know what to do?

We must fight terrorists! We must fight the policies that breed terror and the desire for revenge! War-niks and Peace-niks argue these positions. But these arguments are old, tired and insufficient.

To paraphrase Einstein, on September 11, everything about our world changed except our way of thinking, and thus we drift to unparalleled catastrophe...or opportunity. Which shall it be?

What will turn the tide? We don't know. But we can learn—
together—the way through to a sustainable peace.

Conversation Cafés are places where this collective learning is
happening.

Safety. In times of crisis, when we feel threatened and
insecure, people feel a drive for safety. Safety can mean
shutting down or opening up. It can look like suspension of civil
liberties or hundreds of dialogues with "the other." Shutting
down can mean more guns, police, bombs, armies, covert
operations and wars. Opening up can mean more open debate,
more negotiation and more bringing perpetrators to justice in
courts of law.

Perhaps public safety is as much a matter of us sustaining the
compassion and caring that happened in the weeks following
September 11 as it is about beefing up surveillance and the
military. If any of this is true, then Conversation Cafés have
much to offer. Because they happen in public settings, people
who don't normally talk to one another can come together to
share their thoughts and feelings in a spirit of respect. One
person's view, expressed without a need to convince, could
open another person's eyes. It could soften preconceptions.
And being heard without judgement allows each person to feel
understood. Good conversation can change the world. In this
case, talk is not cheap—it is the most precious thing we can
do.

Fun. Conversation Cafés aren't group therapy—but when you
speak, people are all ears. Conversation Cafés aren't the
movies—but as BIG talk swirls around the table, the real movie
—life—comes alive. Conversation Cafés aren't church, but your
soul might stir. Conversation Cafés aren't lectures, but you'll
learn a lot from the people who come. Conversation Cafés
aren't going out and getting drunk with your buddies—thank
heavens!



**[Return
to top](#)**

But I want to do something!

Don't just stand there, do something! The American way. Get
into action. Fix things.

Yes, there's a lot to do. Research. Writing to your
congresspeople expressing your views. Attending lectures and
meetings. Joining organizations that reflect your views.
Volunteering your time. Taking your perspectives to the courts
or to the streets.

Conversation Cafés are not instead of action. They are before
action—a place to gather your thoughts, find your natural allies,
discover your blind spots, open your heart to the heart of "the

other." All movements begin in conversation.

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