

The Community Café Approach

Lincoln Community Learning Centers | Session III



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COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTERS

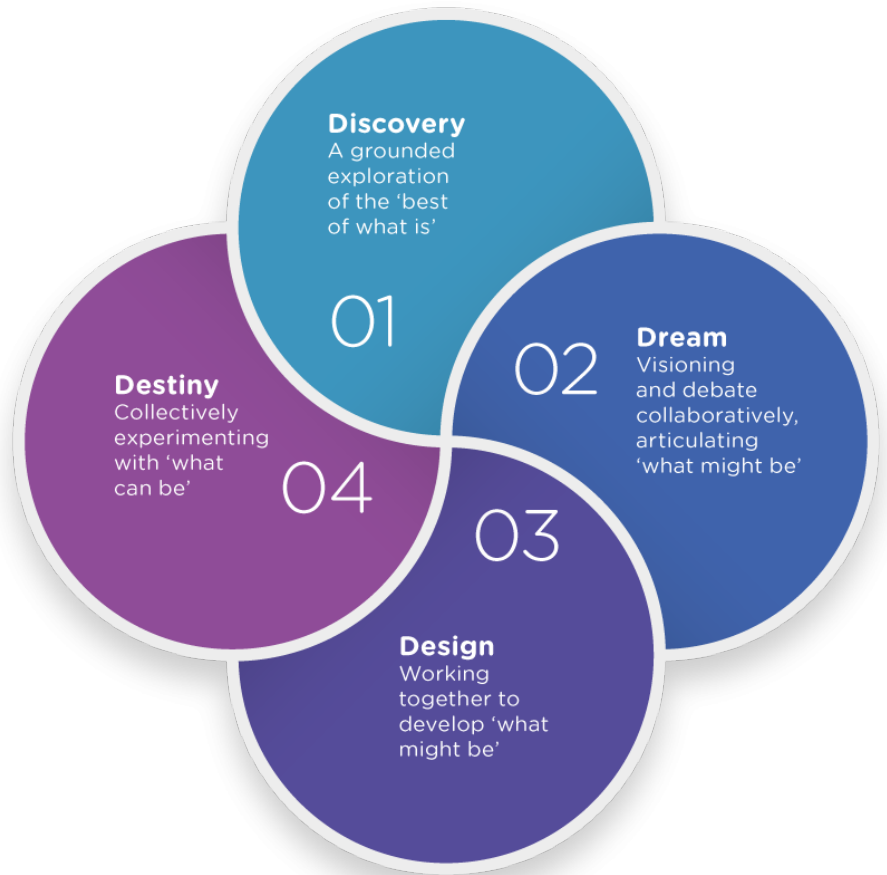
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Appreciative Inquiry (AI):

What is AI?

- Research paradigm focused on creative meaning-making.
- A means of empowering individuals rather than oppressing.
 - o Encourages reflection of positive experiences as a way of collaborating and brainstorming.
 - o While it doesn't ignore the negative, it seeks to help individuals learn how to reframe them in a more positive light by identifying the gap or need that is not being met and collaborating as a group to address it.
- Tool for organizational change.



- o Strengths-based
- o Transformative

What are the 4 D's of AI?

- 1) Discovery
- 2) Dream
- 3) Design
- 4) Destiny/Delivery

Problem Solving vs. AI:

Problem-Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Identify the problems	Identify current strengths and success
Analyze the causes of the problems	Identify the factors that enable our success; envision our desired future
Treat the problems	Innovate to build more support for those factors that enable success and move us toward the future we desire
"We get better by solving our problems."	"We get better by enabling our best work."

References:

Cooperrider, D. (2012). *What is appreciative inquiry?* David Cooperrider and Associates.

<https://www.davidcooperrider.com/ai-process/>

Champlain College. (2021). *AI Commons*. The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry.

<https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/>

Appreciative Inquiry

Around the world, community-based organizations, international agencies, governments, universities, and donors are discovering an inescapable lesson. The fight against poverty, issues of social justice, and environmental decline requires new forms of cooperation, or partnerships, that enable diverse constituencies to join forces to meet enormous challenges which none of them can accomplish alone. The difficulty in forging partnerships built on mutual respect and shared goals can scarcely be underestimated, yet neither can its potential importance. Appreciative Inquiry process has taken this challenge and is creating possibilities for building partnerships that transcend the usual results of many collaborations.

What Is Appreciative Inquiry?

What problems are you having? What is working around here? These two questions underline the difference between traditional Change Management thinking and Appreciative Inquiry. The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; we look for the problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them. This approach is consistent with a historical attitude in American Business that sees human systems as machines and parts (people) as interchangeable. We believe we can fix anything and there is a right answer or solution to any organizational problem or challenge.

In the mid-seventies, David Cooperrider and his associates at Case Western Reserve University challenged this approach and introduced the term Appreciative Inquiry. **Appreciative Inquiry** is an approach to learning that is uniquely intended for discovering, understanding, and fostering innovations in social organizational arrangements and process.

Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works. The result of the process is a series of statements that describe where people want to be, based on past successful experiences. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
"Felt Need" Identification of Problem	Valuing "What Is" (What gives life?)

Appreciative Inquiry

- ★ In every organization, group, or society, something works
- ★ What we focus on becomes our reality
- ★ Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities
- ★ The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way
- ★ People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known)
- ★ If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past
- ★ It is more important to value differences
- ★ The language we use creates our

Cause Analysis	Envisioning "What Might Be"
Solution Analysis	Dialoguing "What Should Be"
Action Planning "Treatment"	Innovating "What Would Be"
Metaphor: Organizations as problems to be solved	Metaphor: Organizations as mystery to be embraced

Participants stir up memories of energizing moments of success creating a new energy that is positive and synergistic. People walk away with a sense of commitment, confidence and affirmation that they have been successful. They also know clearly how to make more moments of success. It is this energy that distinguishes the generative process that results from Appreciative Inquiry. There is no end because it is a living process.

Appreciative Inquiry is a leadership tool for individual, organizational or community change.



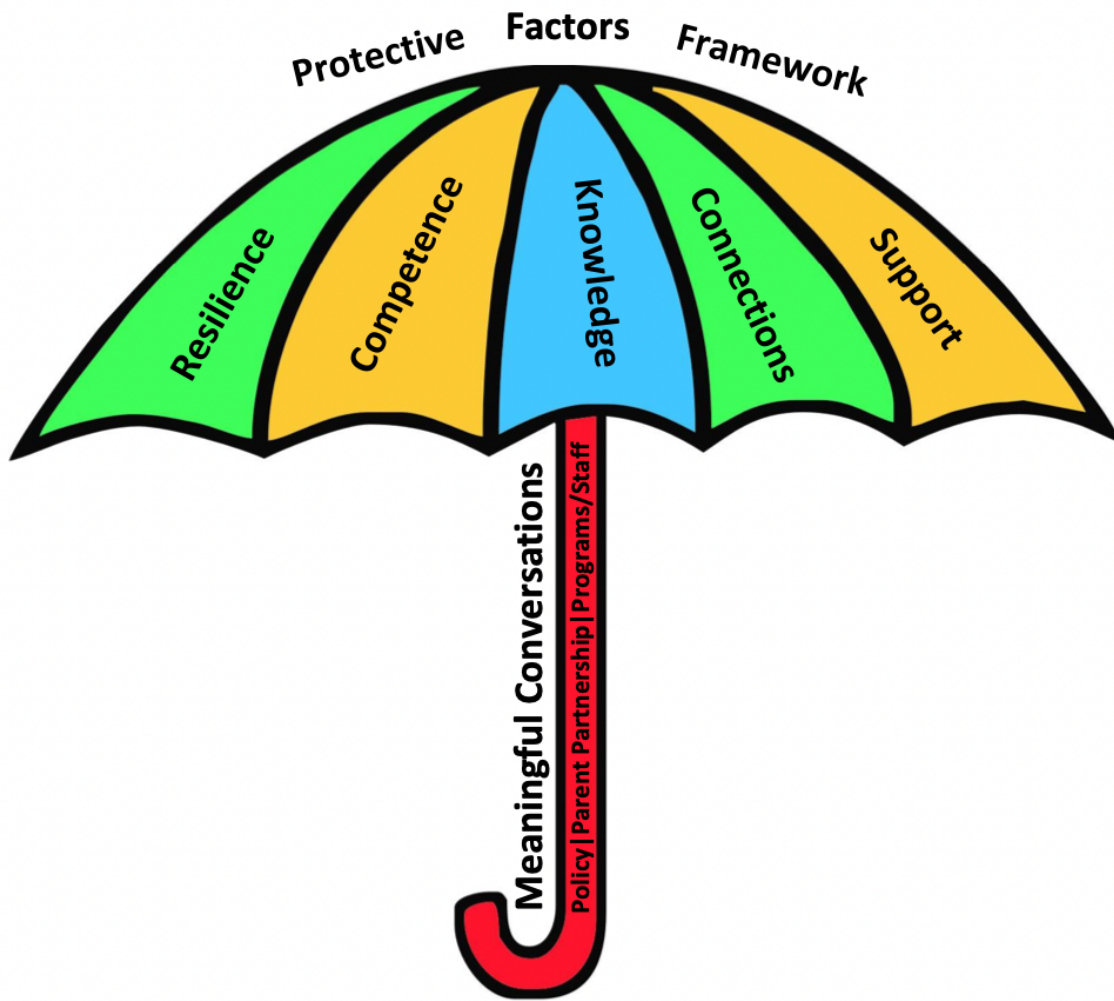
eValuations: © Yoland Trevino, TCI

Appreciative Interview for Community

Some Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

- ★ There is some value in every organization and community
- ★ Starting a change process from a position of strength adds power/possibility to the process
- ★ Questions are a good tool for facilitating change
- ★ The kinds of questions you ask determine what you will find
- ★ Stories are an important part of information gathering
- ★ Image (vision, dream) and action are linked
- ★ Having a positive, powerful vision/dream empowers people to take action
- ★ Getting the whole system involved helps bring about change

Protective and Promotive Factors:



Optimal Child Development



CORE MEANINGS OF THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective Factor	Core Meaning
<p>Parental Resilience: Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.</p>	<p><u>Resilience Related to General Life Stressors</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. managing the stressors of daily life b. calling forth the inner strength to proactively meet personal challenges, manage adversities and heal the effects of one's own traumas c. having self-confidence d. believing that one can make and achieve goals e. having faith; feeling hopeful f. solving general life problems g. having a positive attitude about life in general h. managing anger, anxiety, sadness, feelings of loneliness and other negative feelings i. seeking help for self when needed <p><u>Resilience Related to Parenting Stressors</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. calling forth the inner strength to proactively meet challenges related to one's child b. not allowing stressors to keep one from providing nurturing attention to one's child c. solving parenting problems d. having a positive attitude about one's parenting role and responsibilities e. seeking help for one's child when needed
<p>Social Connections: Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Building trusting relationships; feeling respected and appreciated b. Having friends, family members, neighbors and others who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide emotional support (e.g., affirming parenting skills) • provide instrumental support/concrete assistance (e.g., providing transportation) • provide informational support/serve as a resource for parenting information • provide spiritual support (e.g., providing hope and encouragement) • provide an opportunity to engage with others in a positive manner • help solve problems • help buffer parents from stressors • reduce feelings of isolation • promote meaningful interactions in a context of mutual trust and respect c. Having a sense of connectedness that enables parents to feel secure, confident and empowered to "give back" to others



CORE MEANINGS OF THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective Factor	Core Meaning
<p>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.</p>	<p>Seeking, acquiring and using accurate and age/stage-related information about:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> parental behaviors that lead to early secure attachments the importance of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being attuned and emotionally available to one's child • being nurturing, responsive and reliable • regular, predictable and consistent routines • interactive language experiences • providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for one's child • providing opportunities for one's child to explore and to learn by doing appropriate developmental expectations positive discipline techniques recognizing and attending to the special needs of a child
<p>Concrete Support in Times of Need: Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> being resourceful being able to identify, find and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves in order to grow (e.g., healthy food, a safe environment), as well as specialized medical, mental health, social, educational or legal services understanding one's rights in accessing eligible services gaining knowledge of relevant services navigating through service systems seeking help when needed having financial security to cover basic needs and unexpected costs
<p>Social and Emotional Competence of Children: Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.</p>	<p><u>Regarding the parent:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> having a positive parental mood having positive perceptions of and responsiveness to one's child responding warmly and consistently to a child's needs being satisfied in one's parental role fostering a strong and secure parent-child relationship creating an environment in which children feel safe to express their emotions being emotionally responsive to children and modeling empathy talking with one's child to promote vocabulary development and language learning setting clear expectations and limits separating emotions from actions encouraging and reinforcing social skills such as greeting others and taking turns creating opportunities for children to solve problems <p><u>Regarding the child:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> developing and engaging in self-regulating behaviors interacting positively with others using words and language skills communicating emotions effectively

World Café Principles of Hosting:



Hosting Tips for Your Consideration

1. What if people need conversation the way fish need water?
 - Ensure you have at least 90 minutes for a café
 - Enlist others in your planning
 - Limit table conversations to three or four people
 - Have opportunities for small group, large group and paired conversations
 - Invite diverse perspectives into the conversation
2. What if conversation is how positive change happens for families?
 - Relate questions to the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework (www.cssp.org)
 - Allow ample time for people to get to know each other
 - Allow people to talk about what is working well now or what has worked in the past; the strengths and gifts they bring to the group and in their lives
 - Craft café questions that allow people to share stories
 - Encourage participants to speak from personal experience-discourage giving advice
3. What are ways hosts keep conversations focused?
 - Be clear about the purpose of the café-questions help learn more about that topic
 - Announce the purpose at the start of each Café
 - Set a context for each question
 - Have table hosts recap prior conversations
 - Monitor the energy level people have during their table conversations and adjust your agenda accordingly
 - Make "butterfly" visits to tables as needed
4. How do we create a space that nurtures meaningful conversation?
 - Discuss with your team how to ensure a safe, welcoming, relaxed, fun environment
 - Care for yourself as lovingly as you treat others
 - Check in: How is your breathing? Are you relaxed? Are you having fun? Are you learning?
 - Plan culturally relevant activities during the café-food, art, music, poetry, cultural celebrations
 - Greet each person at the door with a welcoming smile
5. What if the gold lies in discovering the big questions?
 - Remind participants that their contributions benefit the whole group
 - Let go of needing to come up with the right answers
 - Use the Appreciative Inquiry process as a guide to plan next steps and designing questions

6. What if no one knows which contribution will be the key ingredient?
 - Model respect of everyone's style of communication and point of view
 - Capture conversations with words, pictures, graphic recordings
 - Send out written harvests after each café
 - Ask people to share themes or patterns they heard in their conversations

7. What if listening together is how movement happens?
 - Invite all to listen and write, draw or doodle during their conversations
 - Make the individual conversations visible to the whole group (post paper table cloths)
 - Allow time for people to recap highlights of the previous conversations
 - Allow time for individual reflections, moments of silence
 - Practice a deep listening activity at each café
 - Hosts encourage listening for patterns, the deeper meaning and other questions that arise

8. What if the harvest provides seeds for action and...?
 - Make a plan for sharing harvests with others including potential neighborhood, community and state partners
 - Look for themes in café harvests, share themes with others
 - Ask, "What can I do? What must we do together?"
 - Allow at least 30 minutes for the harvest conversation
 - Document strengths and what is working well in harvests (Appreciative Inquiry,) stories of changes that happened as a result of cafés
 - Engage community partners throughout the process
 - Encourage participants to share what they learned at cafés with the community
 - Encourage others to become hosts
 - Allow room in opening and closing routine for sharing insights, ideas, changes they have made as a result of café conversations
 - Celebrate and communicate achievements!

Please visit our website and offer your ideas, harvests, thoughts or questions at www.thecommunitycafe.com or write us at info@thecommunitycafe.com

Questions from: Brown, Juanita, The World Café, Berrett Koehler Publ., 2005 www.theworldcafe.org

The Community Café Collaborative

Parents Partnering with Communities & Organizations to Strengthen Families

Virtual Hosting Tips and Tricks:

Hosting events on an online platform can be challenging – it can be difficult to translate in-person events in a virtual space. Below are a few tips and tricks we have learned from our own experiences.

1. Timing

- a. Keeping your event to an hour is a good idea – any longer and people may start to lose interest.
- b. Additionally, be respectful of others' time. Be sure to start and end on time.
- c. Finally, it can be challenging to find a time that works for all. Trial and error can be your friend when trying to determine the best time to hold space for your community.

2. Choose Your Platform Wisely

- a. Though most people are more comfortable with online platforms, it is important to still think about your audience when selecting.

3. Engage Your Team

- a. Everyone still has a role to play to make the event successful. We usually have someone in charge of monitoring the chat box, another helping navigate other technical things (i.e., helping set up polls, set up breakout rooms, etc.), and a few individuals focused on facilitating the conversation.

4. Engage Your Participants

- a. Always begin with introductions – everyone wants to feel welcomed and part of the group, especially over a computer screen. Brief introductions help start the rapport building.
- b. Make time for casual conversation. Part of the beauty of the Community Café approach and the Circle Way is the emphasis on a check-in / icebreaker question. This intentionality will help participants feel more comfortable, promoting more vulnerability for the later discussions.
- c. As a host, it's important to try and create space where all feel comfortable to share and feel heard. Creating an informal and warm space is possible virtually, it just takes practice.

5. Be Okay with Silence

- a. Holding virtual space can be awkward – seeing a screen full of faces and everyone on mute can be difficult to navigate. Remember, it might take folks a little longer to unmute, prepare their thoughts, etc. before responding to questions posed.
- b. Be patient – silence also usually means you asked a great question that requires more time to reflect.

The Circle Way Basic Principles:

The Circle Way

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR CALLING A CIRCLE

Circle started around the
cook-fires of humanity's
ancestors and has
accompanied us ever since.
We remember this space. When
we listen, we speak more
thoughtfully. We lean in
to shared purpose.

COMPONENTS OF CIRCLE

What transforms a meeting into a circle is the willingness of people to shift from informal socializing or opinionated discussion into a receptive attitude of thoughtful speaking and deep listening that embodies the practices and structures outlined here.



INTENTION

Intention shapes the circle and determines who will come, how long the circle will meet, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected. The caller of the circle spends time articulating intention and invitation

START-POINT OR WELCOME

Once people have gathered, it is helpful for the host, or a volunteer participant, to begin the circle with a gesture that shifts people's attention from social space to council space. This gesture of welcome may be a moment of silence, reading a poem, or listening to a song – whatever invites centering.

SETTING THE CENTER

The center of a circle is like the hub of a wheel: all energies pass through it, and it holds the rim together. To help people remember how the hub helps the group, the center of a circle usually holds objects that represent the intention of the circle. Any symbol that fits this purpose or adds beauty will serve: flowers, a bowl or basket, a candle.

CHECK-IN / GREETING

Check-in helps people into a frame of mind for council and reminds everyone of their commitment to the expressed intention. It insures that people are truly present. Verbal sharing, especially a brief story, weaves the interpersonal net.

Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and proceeds around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken. Sometimes people place individual objects in the center as a way of signifying their presence and relationship to the intention.

GUARDIAN

The single most important tool for aiding self-governance and bringing circle back to intention is the role of guardian. One circle member volunteers to watch and safeguard group energy and observe the circle's process. The guardian usually employs a gentle noise-maker, such as a chime, bell, or rattle, that signals to everyone to stop action, take a breath, rest in a space of silence. The guardian makes this signal again and speaks to why s/he called the pause. Any member may call for a pause.

The Circle Way

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR CALLING A CIRCLE

SETTING CIRCLE AGREEMENTS

The use of agreements allows all members to have a free and profound exchange, to respect a diversity of views, and to share responsibility for the well-being and direction of the group. Agreements often used include:

- We hold all stories or personal material in confidentiality
- We listen to each other with compassion and curiosity
- We ask for what we need and offer what we can
- We agree to employ a group guardian to watch our need, timing and energy. We agree to pause at a signal when we feel the need to pause

THREE PRINCIPLES

1. **Leadership rotates** among all circle members
2. **Responsibility is shared** for the quality of experience
3. **Reliance is on wholeness**, rather than on any personal agenda

THREE PRACTICES

1. **Speak with intention:** noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
2. **Listen with attention:** respectful of the learning process for all members of the group
3. **Tend to the well-being of the circle:** remaining aware of the impact of our contributions

FORMS OF COUNCIL

1. **Talking piece council** is often used as a part of check-in, check-out and whenever there is a desire to slow down the conversation, collect all voices and contributions, and be able to speak without interruption.
2. **Conversation council** is often used when reaction, interaction and an interjection of new ideas, thoughts and opinions are needed.

3. **Reflection, or silent council** gives each member time and space to reflect on what is occurring, or needs to occur, in the course of a meeting. Silence may be called so that each person can consider the role or impact they are having on the group, or to help the group realign with their intention, or to sit with a question until there is clarity.

CHECK-OUT AND FAREWELL

At the close of a circle meeting, it is important to allow a few minutes for each person to comment on what they learned, or what stays in their heart and mind as they leave. Closing the circle by checking out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on what has transpired, and to pick up objects if they have placed something in the center.

As people shift from council space to social space or private time, they release each other from the intensity of attention being in circle requires. Often after check-out, the host, guardian, or a volunteer will offer a few inspirational words of farewell, or signal a few seconds of silence before the circle is released.

May your circles be great teachers and places to rest on the journey.

This handout is a gift from **THE CIRCLE WAY**, a loosely connected global circle of colleagues who practice, consult, and teach The Circle Way. Originally mentored and guided by Ann Linnea and Christina Baldwin of PeerSpirit Inc., we offer our own consulting services and training opportunities all over the world. Drawing on the same set of teachings and practices, we work both independently and in partnership with one another to spread what we have learned further into the world.

Connection Circle Template:

****Intention Today:***

Host:

Guardian:

<p align="center"><u>Our Agreements:</u> (always open to development)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What is said in this room stays in this room, what is learned here leaves here. * We listen to one another with compassion and curiosity. * We ask for what we need and offer what we can. * We agree to employ a group guardian to watch our needs, timing, and energy. * We agree to pause at a signal when we feel the need to pause. * Take care of self and needs. 	<p align="center"><u>The Circle Way (TCW) Roles:</u></p> <p><i>Host:</i> Host sets agenda and helps coordinate the flow for the meeting using TCW and reading for the week.</p> <p><i>Guardian:</i> “Circle member who watches and safeguards group energy and observes the circle’s process. Single most important tool for aiding self-governance and bringing the circle back to intention is the role of guardian. Guardian calls for pauses- stop action, take breath, rest in a space of silence - however anyone can call for a pause.”</p>
<p align="center"><u>TCW 3 Principles:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Leadership rotates o Responsibility is shared for the quality of experience o Reliance is on wholeness, rather than on any personal agenda 	<p align="center"><u>TCW 3 Practices:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Speak with intention: noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment o Listen with attention: respectful of the learning process for all members of the group o Tend to the well-being of the circle: remaining aware of the impact of our contributions

****Setting of Center:***

- Share about why the object was chosen; how does it connect to the circle’s intention?

****Check-In:***

- *Check-In Prompt:*
 - o Go around the group & share _____ (i.e., name, connection to circle, etc.).
 - o Respond to prompt, sharing whatever you are comfortable with sharing. One can always pass on sharing.

****Reading & Reflection***

Reflection Questions:

****Ending quote/reflection by guardian followed by Check-Out:***

Check-Out Prompt:

****Next Meeting: Assign***

Date/time:

Host:

Guardian:

The Community Café Collaborative and Café Theory of Change:

Website: <https://thecommunitycafe.org/>

Developed by the Community Café Collaborative of WA

Community Café Collaborative – Outcome Map

