

# WORKING TOGETHER

TOOLS for

## HOSTING CONVERSATIONS

These cards are here to support people in Scotland who've taken part in Art of Hosting trainings. Use them as prompts to guide your practice and spark ideas in your work.

The tools in this deck come from the Art of Hosting—a way of working together that's been growing and evolving around the world for over 20 years. It began when people in different places started using conversation to create change. They connected, shared what they were learning, and gave the practice a name. Some early contributors include Monica Nissen, Toke Møller, Tim Merry, Meg Wheatley, David Isaacs and Juanita Brown. Art of Hosting is co-created and shared by a global network. There's no central organisation or official training body. Instead, it's held together by shared principles and practices.

These cards share our interpretation of the Art of Hosting practices. They were created by the Argyll and Bute Living Well Board as part of the Communities Working Together project, to help bring these ideas into everyday use.

# WORLD CAFE

## What it is

World Café is a way to have meaningful conversations in small groups—where people listen, share ideas, and build on each other's thoughts around questions that matter.



## How it works

World Café is based on a few key ideas:

- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Good conversation comes from really listening, connecting ideas, and noticing patterns.
- Insight grows when different people and ideas are brought together.

## Steps to run a World Café

1. Set up small tables or groups with 4–5 people, like in a café.
2. Plan a few rounds of conversation—each round lasts about 20–30 minutes.
3. Use open and meaningful questions to guide the conversation.
4. Ask one person at each table to stay as the “table host.”
5. After each round, everyone else moves to a new table.
6. The table host shares the main ideas from the last conversation with the new group.
7. After several rounds, bring everyone back together to share key insights from the whole room.

# OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

WHOEVER  
COMES are  
the RIGHT  
PEOPLE



WHENEVER  
it STARTS is  
the RIGHT  
TIME



LAW of  
TWO  
FEET



WHATEVER  
HAPPENS is  
the ONLY THING  
that COULD HAVE



WHEN it's  
OVER it's  
OVER



## What it is:

Open Space is a way to have powerful conversations about things that really matter. The people who care about the issues create the agenda and take the lead.

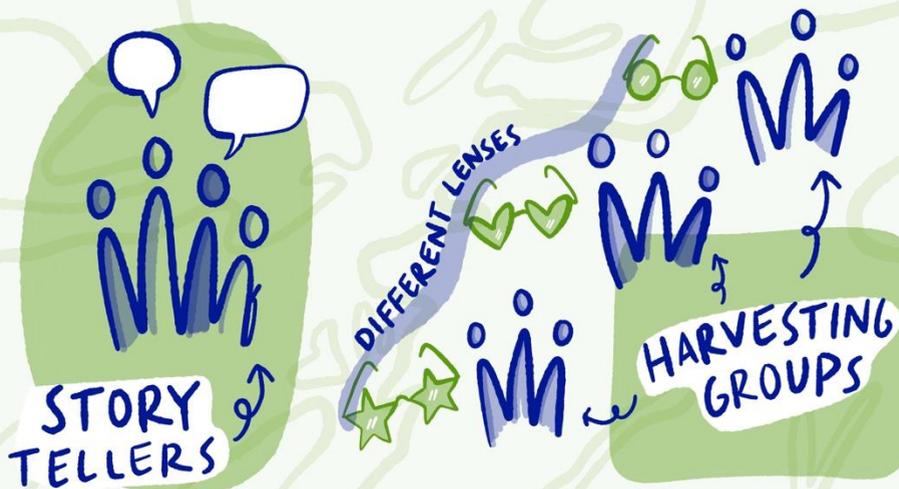
## How it works

1. Invite anyone with an idea or issue they care about to come forward, write it down, say a few words about it, and choose a time and space for the discussion.
2. As people share, they place their ideas on a big wall chart so others can see what's being offered and when.
3. Everyone reads the agenda and decides which sessions they want to join.
4. Each group meets, talks, and captures key points (someone in each group takes notes). These are shared on a "news wall" so everyone can read what happened.
5. End with a final circle where people can share what they learned or what they're taking away.

People take on different roles:

- Host – starts a conversation and holds the space for it
- Participant – joins a session and contributes
- Bumblebee – moves between groups, spreading ideas
- Butterfly – takes a break, reflects, and brings calm

# COLLECTIVE STORY HARVEST



## What it is

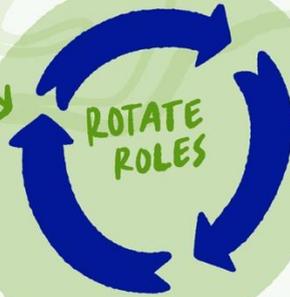
This is a way of sharing stories to learn from different experiences. By listening with focus and intention, we uncover deeper insights, patterns, and learning from each story.

## How it works

1. Invite storytellers
2. Choose listening lenses (e.g. challenges, opportunities)
3. Support storytellers to develop their stories, making them aware of the lenses that will be used by the listeners
4. Invite participants and form small groups
5. Each group assigns a lens to each listener
6. The storyteller shares for 10-15 minutes
7. Listeners and witnesses reflect
8. Listeners regroup by lens to explore common patterns
9. Gather as a whole group to share learning and insights
10. Close with a final circle

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

STORYTELLING  
→ TRIOS



DEFINE DISCOVER DREAM DESIGN DELIVER

## What it is

Appreciative Inquiry is about focusing on what works. In storytelling trios, people share real experiences that went well. By listening closely, we can spot what helped things go right—like actions, attitudes, or conditions—and learn from them. It's a great way to build trust, find strengths, and learn from each other.

## How it works:

1. Start with a good question
2. Form groups of three (Storyteller, Listener, Witness)
3. Each round lasts about 15 minutes:
  - 10 minutes for storytelling
  - 3 minutes for the listener to reflect back
  - 2 minutes for the witness to share what they noticed
4. Repeat until everyone has shared a story
5. Share as a group

# POWERFUL QUESTIONS



## **What it is**

Powerful questions help people have better conversations. They keep things focused, bring out different perspectives, and help groups move forward together.

## **Why they're useful**

A good question can help people think more clearly, see things in a new way, and find shared ground. It helps shift a group from just talking to making progress. Behind every good question is a clear purpose—know what you're trying to explore or learn, and why it matters.

## **What to think about when creating questions:**

1. Scope
2. Assumptions
3. Construction

Tip: Try to create questions with the group when you can. Shared questions feel more meaningful and relevant to everyone involved.

# CIRCLE

LISTEN  
*with*  
ATTENTION



SPEAK  
*with*  
INTENTION

## What it is

Circle Practice is a way of having group conversations while sitting in a circle. Sitting this way helps remove hierarchy—everyone can see each other, and each voice matters equally. It's useful for check-ins, check-outs, making group decisions, or having deeper, more thoughtful conversations.

## How it works:

- Start with purpose
- Open the conversation
- Use a centerpiece
- Agree how you'll work together
- Use a talking piece

# FOUR FOLD PRACTICE



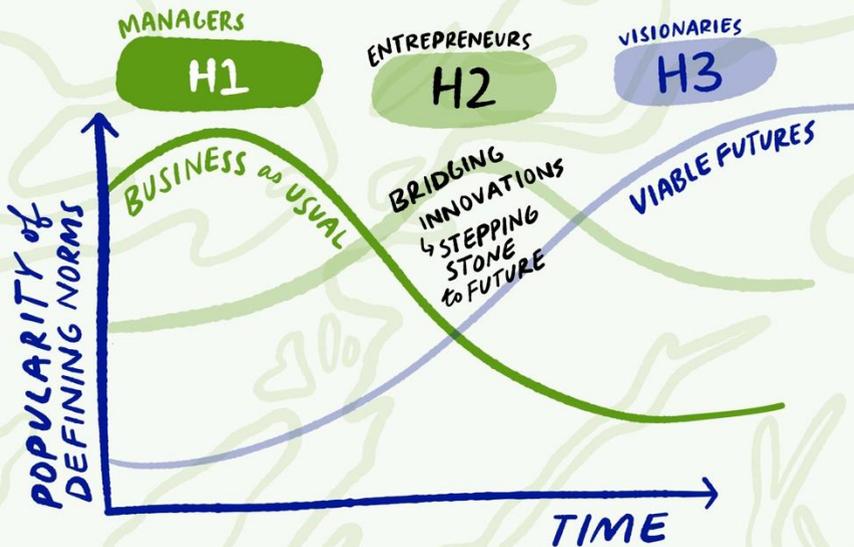
## What it is

This is a simple way to grow your ability to host meaningful conversations. At the heart of it all is **purpose**—the reason you’ve come together.

1. Be Present
2. Host Yourself
3. Practice Conversation
4. Host Conversations That Matter

Work with others. This is best done with others. Learn together. Host together. Build a community of practice over time.

# THREE HORIZONS



## What it is

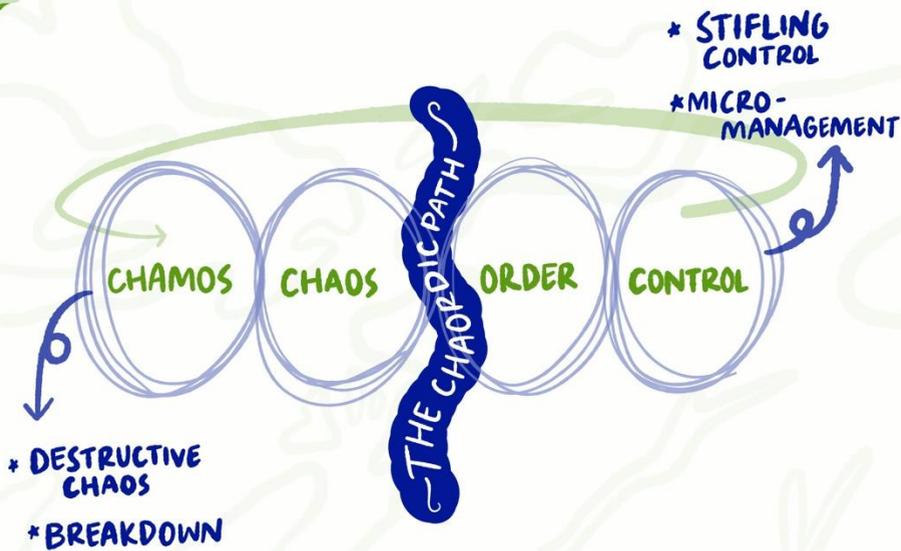
Three Horizons is a simple framework for thinking about change over time. It helps you look at what's happening now, what kind of future you want, and how you might get there.

## How it works

- Horizon 1 – The Present. Often held by managers or system stewards—people focused on keeping things running.
- Horizon 3 – The Future. Often imagined by visionaries—people who see new possibilities and hold long-term hopes.
- Horizon 2 – The Transition. Often driven by entrepreneurs or changemakers—people experimenting and bridging between now and the future.

Use this framework to connect your ideas, spot patterns, and shape a path forward. It's a helpful way to plan, reflect, and support long-term change.

# CHAORDIC PATH



# WICKED PROBLEMS

INFINITE

COMPLEX

WICKED PROBLEMS

UNCLEAR

? ROOTS ?



↳ WELL-MEANING INTENTIONS can MAKE things WORSE

MULTI-LAYERED CHALLENGES across

DEMOCRACY  
HEALTH  
ECONOMY  
ENVIRONMENT

## What they are

Wicked problems are problems facing society are extremely complex and without obvious solutions. Well-meaning intentions can even make these problems worse. In the economy, health, democracy and the environment we see intersecting and multi-layered challenges. They can be difficult to define, with high stakes for getting it wrong, and infinite. Examples include homelessness and poverty; climate emergencies; hate crimes like those related to racism and misogyny; and increasing ill-health and premature death.

## How we can show up and work on wicked problems

1. Work collaboratively and across sectors, and with people who are affected
2. Understand how the problem sits within the wider system and all the interconnected aspects before acting
3. Ask 'why' five times to better understand the underlying causes
4. Work iteratively, testing potential approaches, refining and trying again
5. Be flexible and adaptable and willing to stop midway through and test something completely different.
6. Identify all the levers needed to make lasting changes eg policy makers and governments, funders, collective community power, academia etc.