

Unhurried Conversation

What is it for?

.....
A great reflective process for groups

Time & People

.....
45 to 75 minutes
5 to 20 people, occasionally we use it with larger groups

Materials

.....
A mundane object to act as the talking piece

Source

.....
Indigenous process

And also...

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Lots more information about the unhurried process and philosophy at unhurried.org

Description

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We use a talking piece - usual an everyday object like a sugar bowl. When we start the group hold it, and explain that when you hold the bowl you speak, and if you aren't holding it, you get to listen, and resist all urges to interrupt.

We explain that when you're done talking, don't pass the piece to anyone, just put it on the table. When you've finished speaking you are giving up control of what happens next.

When the next person picks up the talking piece they might follow on from what's been said, or bring something new to the conversation. Someone can also hold silence by holding the talking piece, that might be useful if you just want to gather your thoughts, you still won't be interrupted.

It's possible to ask questions, but don't expect that they will necessarily get answers, or you may get them but not straight away. (It's a subtle one this, but asking questions and expecting answers, especially from individuals, tends to disrupt the flow)

We sometimes talk about avoiding "ping pong" where the same two people alternate holding the bowl and effectively engage in a direct conversation, often asking and answering questions. I

Sometimes, we address the fear, "what if someone grabs the piece and talks for a long time?" We say, first, that doesn't seem to happen much, but if it does, we suggest you relax and enjoy it, like a theatrical performance.

We usually close by giving a warning of when time is running out. Sometimes I suggest everyone says a few closing words.

The effect of the talking piece is quite strong and generates a very different quality of conversation. People don't feel obliged to stick to a single topic and it's more satisfying when many different ideas are shared. If the groups gets the idea that we have to stick to a subject, it easily becomes quite boring.