

One-to-One Conversation as Sacred Encounter

A one-to-one intentional conversation is a sacred, natural, but uncommon conversation with someone whose life, values, vision and motivation you want to honor and engage.

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1. Purpose. One-to-one conversations are engaged to:

- a. **Build Relationships.** Sacred encounters open us up to something bigger than ourselves, specifically: relationship with others. Relationships offer life and cultivate possibilities. It is through relationships that significant things happen. When people are in relationship, they can share, plan, dream, create and get things done. Without relationships, we feel alone and powerless and act as individuals. People are more likely to respond to an invitation to work together from someone with whom they have a relationship. One-to-ones build networks of relationships and build community.
- b. **Uncover Heart & Passion.** We sometimes call this: Self-interest. Self-interests are those things that a person feels most strongly about and that motivates a person. It is their passion or unforgettable fire that is tied to their own story and the stories of others. People are most likely to get involved in things around their self-interests.
- c. **Develop Clarity.** One-to-ones allow people to express their feelings about things. When people talk about something, it helps make that thing clearer to them. People rarely have an opportunity to express themselves to a good listener. A conversation provides this opportunity and helps people gain clarity for themselves. In addition, helping someone develop clarity about what matters to them strengthens the relationship.
- d. **Gather Information.** One-to-ones are an opportunity to gain information about the community, neighborhood, school, church, etc. You will find out what's going on, who your community members/neighbors are and, most importantly, what they are thinking and feeling and what is really going on in the community.

2. Arranging and Preparing for a Meeting

- a. **Schedule the Conversation.** Phone, text or email first to set up the appointment. During the pandemic we can schedule and have face to face conversations on the phone, computer or tablet using a video platform such as Zoom or in a socially distanced setting when possible. Phone calls can work, too.
- b. **Introduce Yourself.** Explain what you are doing and ask if you can have 45 minutes of time to have an intentional conversation with them. If possible, have a mutual contact introduce you to make it less of a cold call, or ask for the meeting in person once you've met.
 - i. Example: "Hi, my name is ____ and I am with _____. I got your name from _____. We are meeting with people in the community/neighborhood to hear people's stories and learn what is most important to them in order to strengthen the community. Could I arrange to have 45 minutes of your time for you and I to get to know one another?"



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- ii. If you already know the person, skip to the purpose: "We are meeting with people in our community/neighborhood ____ and I'd love to know more of your story." We all have many in our circles with stories and passions we don't yet know.
 - c. **Be Specific.** Make an appointment for a specific day and time and let them know you only want 45 minutes up to an hour (at most) of their time.
 - d. **Leave It Simple and General.** Make clear that you are coming to get to know their story and share yours with them, and not to sell them on anything.
 - e. **Take Time to Prepare.** Before the conversation, think about what you may know about the person and what you think may be their self-interest/what they care deeply about. Think through the questions you want to be sure to ask and what you will say about what you are doing.
3. **The Meeting/Conversation.** There is no formula for having a powerful meeting. It's really just an intentional, curious conversation. Enjoy yourself and try to establish some rapport. Here are some general points:
- a. **Introduce Yourself** and explain why you are there. If you already know the person, be specific about what you are seeking in this conversation (purpose/specific question).
 - b. **Warm Up.** Have a few simple questions or comments ready to develop a little relaxed conversation at the beginning. This will get them talking and help you get a feel for them. Ask questions, listen closely, keep it relaxed. Talk about things the person seems interested in.
 - c. **Establish Some Common Ground.** Share something about yourself and your experiences, life story, etc, seeking possible intersections between your stories. Remember:
 - i. We are not selling anything, recruiting for a project, doing a survey, judging or analyzing them or offering advice. If you find yourself doing any of these things, *stop yourself!*
 - d. **Listen Intently.** Listen for opportunities to be curious and go deeper together. Share parts of your story, too. In general, a successful meeting means the other person is speaking around 60% of the time.
 - e. **Listen for Stories.** Stories tell the most and facilitate connection more than abstractions. Dig for specifics about their experiences and their true feelings about things. Try not to let the conversation get "philosophical" or stuck in ideas. Some things that can be explored are:
 - i. Concerns, ambitions, history, talents, ambitions, jobs, education, dreams, hobbies, background, organizations, family, values, passions, childhood, community.



- f. **Be Courageous.** Go beneath the surface. Seek to identify their self-interest, and listen to hear what seems to excite and motivate them. Use follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of the person. Ask the “why” question. Why did they choose that job or school or neighborhood? How did they come to value something? Where in their story did an interest in something begin? This will give you insight into what really matters to them. Follow your own curiosity. Sometimes people will want to share a painful moment or experience. Be courageous and don’t try to run away from this. Remember that you are not there to psychoanalyze or fix.
- g. **Get a Referral.** Ask whether they can give you the name of other people who they think you should talk with. This will expand your list of potential relationships and will give you an easy introduction to the next person.
- h. **Close the Meeting.** Watch the time and respect both their time and yours. End the meeting by thanking the person.

4. Reflection and Evaluation

- a. **Document Your Reflections.** After your meeting, (do not write notes during a meeting!) write in your notebook or fill out a reflection form. Reflection on your conversation is an essential step! Think about what they said and what it really meant, about what you did and why. You cannot keep all this in your head, and if you meet with them again, you will have notes to refresh your memory.
- b. **Identify What They Care Deeply About.** This will help you remember who this person is and what they care about.
- c. **Evaluate Yourself.** This will help you feel more confident and deepen your practice.



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