

Generative Conversations: Five Core Characteristics

Generative conversations are about discovery, shared questioning and learning, finding new solutions... and requires that all parties are coming in with an open mind where they are willing to de-centre themselves and practice deep empathetic listening. Generative conversations provide the opportunity for something new to emerge that wouldn't exist if done in isolation by any one individual.

Some essential elements of Generative Conversations, and what makes this approach different from others:

- They are intentional conversations that are focused on possibilities.
- They involve deep listening and an honest exchange of sharing and inquiry which allows for discovery and new solutions.
- People who have different opinions don't try to be right—they try to learn from each other's point of view, and search for commonalities.
- These conversations allow for possibility and meaning to emerge that no one would have thought of individually.

Openness

A willingness to let go of certainty and hear other perspectives. Openness comes from within. Individuals must truly be open to hearing new perspectives and to listening deeply.

Self-Accountability

Being responsible for how you articulate your perspective and its impact on others. Self-Accountability includes using "I" statements and suspending your own judgements of others.

Mindfulness

Being present in the conversation that is happening, and letting go of old conflicts or disagreements of the past. Mindfulness means truly listening to what the other person is saying, not only selecting information that reinforces your perspectives and opinions.

Authenticity

Showing up as your full self. Authenticity means speaking your perspective with honesty and clarity.

Coherence

The creation of a holistic view from multiple perspectives. Through exploring similarities and differences, what seems fragmented and misaligned can come together to form a shared vision.

Generative Conversations: Process

Plan

Look for commonalities and focus on possibilities.

- Summarize what you have learned from the conversations
- Talk about strengths of the head, heart, hands you can each contribute
- Invite others to take action or stay in touch

Learn

Discover questions you are each interested to answer.

- How can you learn more?
- Who else might you involve?

Connect

Learn what people care enough about to take action on.

- Listen to understand, not to judge.
- Share your vision. Start with Why.

Explore

Explore and share what you each know.

- What is working well?
- Who else might you involve?

Based on the work of the Cafe Institute

What types of conversations would you like to have in your community?