

Seniors for Climate

How to Organize a Climate Café

THE GOAL:

Conversations That Matter and Shape Our Future...

- story-telling blends ideas and perspectives.
- we share and consolidate new insights, discoveries, questions.
- we use our imaginations.
- engagement, reflections, and emotions are encouraged.
- we have fun working together.

By the End of the Afternoon, We Hope Participants Will...

- feel a sense of agency or personal power in the face of climate change.
- feel comfortable having climate-related conversations.
- understand how to use personal stories to communicate effectively.

MAKING A PLAN:

Planning Ahead:

- clarify purpose and topic.
- all organizers should be able to explain the process.
- decide on key questions.
- select co-facilitators, one for each table.
- a host will introduce the event, act as timekeeper, and float.
- the co-facilitators will listen and encourage conversation, provide a summary of the conversations and will facilitate the closing.

Prepare a Hospitable Space

- set tables in conversation clusters, café-style.
- cover with white paper.
- put out coloured and regular pens.
- place a vase of flowers on each table.
- put 5 to 6 maximum people per table, including facilitator.
- allow 1.5 to 3 hours total.
- decide if you wish to have nametags for everyone.

One Size Doesn't Fit All:

Please adjust the setup depending on your local context, your participants, and yourself.

PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS:

Questions:

The right questions genuinely matter, spark reflection and dialogue, and are not too controversial. They should be simple and clear. The questions help to bring forward unconscious assumptions while maintaining respect for diverse thought.

Sample Questions:

1. *What brought you to this Climate Café today?*
2. *What is a favourite memory of being in nature?*
3. *What concerns, worries, or frustrates you about climate change?*
4. *What makes you feel positive or hopeful about the future?*
5. *What does a positive climate future look like to you?*
6. *What is a story or example of climate action that has inspired you?*
7. *How do you think climate conversations differ across generations?*
8. *What is something from your childhood that you feel is important to preserve?*

HOW THE EVENT UNFOLDS:

Welcome

- the host introduces the team members. Ask the table facilitators to rise at their tables.
- invite everyone to look around and exchange names with at least one other person whom they don't know.
- let folks know we don't take breaks (unless the planners have decided otherwise in advance), but folks can get coffee or bathroom breaks as needed.
- they should feel free to write or draw on the paper tablecloths.

Facilitator Roles

- one facilitator per table
- facilitators read out the question and ask folks to take a minute for reflection.

- facilitators open the conversation, guide the discussion, make sure that key insights are recorded.
- facilitators look for key connections, ideas, discoveries and deeper questions.
- the facilitator can act as a scribe, or a volunteer can do it.
- make sure everyone has a chance to speak, if they wish.
- respect all opinions. Speak from your mind and heart. Listen to understand. Focus on the topic at hand. Link and connect ideas. Listen as a group for deeper insights and questions.
- facilitators, questions, and recording sheets remain at the tables when the groups move.

Participant Roles

- participants jot down answers.
- participants take turns speaking and they listen respectfully.
- 15- or 20-minute limit per question.
- move to the next table as a group.

What Happens During the Café?

The facilitator summarizes what the last table answered, then the same process is followed. People can add to the previous group's thoughts or record their own. If groups only record their own thoughts, the facilitator will look for common themes which can also deepen the conversation and topic. Be flexible: each café will be different. The conversations and reflections are the important part.

If Conflict Should Arise:

Do not shy away from potential conflict but use it to deepen understanding by giving space, listening carefully to each other, and reframing in neutral language, transforming tense moments into productive exchanges. It's not easy but a goal for us to try to achieve. It helps to know ahead of time what sort of behaviour sets us off so that we will not get triggered towards these things and become reactive ourselves. Empathy and sensitivity are crucial as participants may have strong emotional reactions.

Conclusion:

- table facilitators can give a very brief summary of what happened at their table.
- depending on the energy in the room, the host can lead a discussion about common themes, thoughts, insights, and potential next steps.
- thank everyone for coming. Point out that there's more coffee and no need to rush away (unless there is) so folks should meet each other and chat. Invite everyone to sign the email list if there is one.

