

Facilitating Table Conversations

When holding small group conversations (for example with World Café format), here are techniques you can use to handle common situations. You can print out these tips and share them with any other table facilitators.

Your starting point

- Be at ease to put others at ease.
- Make people feel welcome and valued. Have them introduce themselves.
- The guidelines confirm that everyone shares responsibility for this experience.

Sample cues for a successful facilitation

1 Balancing participation

- *Who haven't we heard from yet? Can someone share a different perspective?*
- *You have a lot to share. Would you be willing to write it down (on the table sheet or worksheet) so we can capture it?*

2 Staying on topic

- *How do you see the connection to the question we are discussing?*
- *Our assignment tonight is to bring our experience to these questions. How does what you shared relate to the question we are discussing?*

3 Adjusting focus

- *What about that is important to you?* (Moving from specific to the larger conversation)
- *Can you share an example?* (Moving from broad to more specific)

4 If things get tense

- Use "home base" questions that bring people back to what they care about and value
- *Why did this invitation interest you or appeal to you?*
- *How does this topic relate to what you care about? Your experience?*
- *Who else should be in the next discussion on this topic?*