

Transpartisan Salon, Concise Guide

Purpose

Our purpose in gathering is to create a space for respectful dialogue, listening, and learning in search of common ground and to set an example for how a politically diverse community can come together.

Vision

Our vision is that from this type of respectful dialogue we can identify possible solutions to problems in our community, and that official elected leaders will want to draw upon the wisdom generated from these conversations and bring that wisdom into official governing bodies.

What and Who We Are

We are a leaderless network of networks – group of groups, party of parties – without formal power, aiming to connect people and ideas freely across political, religious, racial and economic lines. We are a self-organized, open source, open participation, open space conversation focused on connectivity, curiosity, learning and understanding, rather than agreement or consensus.

Goals

- Facilitate a healthy conversation across traditional social and ideological divides.
- Search for solutions that reflect the aspirations and concerns of all.
- Use conflict as a sensor to identify important issues that need addressing, recognizing that relationship-building takes time, patience, and good will.
- Catalyze a shift in the political culture from destructive polarization to a more respectful, responsible and cooperative search for solutions.

Benefits of Participation

- Citizen Education – We create safe places for people from all sides to come together to educate and empower themselves, assembling their various points of view, and come up with a more unified strategy for dealing with our situation.
- Resource Sharing – We provide a place where neighbors can begin connecting resources and skills that can be shared in event of need.
- Co-creative Solutions – We provide a place where average citizens can innovate local solutions and policy ideas, then share them online for the benefit of other groups and officials overwhelmed with complexity.
- Citizens in Recovery – We provide a place where there is no blame or shame, a place where we can go to heal our divided families, communities, and country, one conversation at a time.
- Speaking Truth About Power – We provide a place for people from all sides to come together to begin exploring taboo subjects that have been traditionally unsafe to discuss in public.

Starting a Salon

The intention is to authentically welcome and value as much political difference as possible (which we believe yields greater collective wisdom and intelligence.) You know you've succeeded if the group is NOT just the "choir" speaking to itself!

- Find just one other person from a different political point of view who is also excited about this idea. Once you have a team of two co-hosts, the rest of the organizing is easier.
- Each co-host identifies one or two other people who are also excited about forming a group. In turn, each invites two or three more people.

- Set a time, date, and place to meet and host your first meeting.
- Actively go to where those who think differently gather, be open and transparent about your agenda, build relationships, and invite them to your Transpartisan Salon to look for unexpected allies.
- As you grow, continuously ask, “Who is missing? How can we make it attractive for “them” to join us?”

Dealing with Difference

We employ five simple tools called the “transpartisan toolbox” to keep our conversations on track:

1. THE SILENCE TOOL: We start each meeting with a moment of silence to bring to mind our purpose for gathering. Throughout the meeting we take time to pause and reflect. “Slow down to the speed of wisdom.”
2. THE LISTENING TOOL: When we listen, we listen more deeply, for the values and needs beneath the positions, with an intention to understand the speaker’s real meaning.
3. THE SPEAK-TO-BE-HEARD TOOL: We speak in a way that we can “be heard,” using language, and a tone that opens up, rather than closes down conversation.
4. THE CURIOSITY TOOL: We adopt a curious attitude, asking questions to clarify meaning, seeking to understand rather than persuade. “Don’t get furious, get curious.”
5. THE DE-TRIGGER TOOL: We take personal responsibility for managing our emotional triggers – remembering to breathe, self-monitor, notice and release judgments, keeping ourselves in self-check, so we behave in a manner that is respectful and mutually honoring.

Conversation Agreements

- We ask everyone to commit to using the five tools, to the best of their ability.
- We establish a three minute maximum speaking time.
- If we are unable to manage our triggers, in a way that doesn’t disrupt the conversation or stay within the three minute agreement, we take personal responsibility for excusing ourselves from the meeting until we can.

Sunshine Governance – The “Fourth Branch”

In time, it is conceivable that this network of dozens, even hundreds of monthly, self-organized Transpartisan Salons with our capacity to generate innovative, win/win policy options could begin to organize itself into an informal Sunshine Branch of Governance. To prepare ourselves and develop comprehensive transpartisan approaches, we investigate all 12 Domains, which -- when taken together -- represent a whole system.

1. Domain of Energy
2. Domain of Exchange (commerce, money and banking)
3. Domain of Communications (media)
4. Domain of Land (environment, food, air, and water)
5. Domain of Creativity (arts and culture)
6. Domain of Wellness (health)
7. Domain of Reconciliation (justice)
8. Domain of Security (safety and peacebuilding)
9. Domain of Learning (education)
10. Domain of Governance (coordination and administration)
11. Domain of Innovation (science and technology)
12. Domain of Spirit (religion and spirituality)

Over the course of a year, each monthly Salon will focus on one of these Domains.



Typical 2 ½ Hour Monthly Salon Format (process may vary)

First Fifteen Minutes – “Creating the container”

RAGGEDY START: Hosts and “old timers” be sure to arrive early, welcome newcomers, immediately engage in two’s or three’s talking about “what drew you here.”

CALL TO ORDER: Promptly at 5 min. past hour, a co-host -- a different person each month -- calls the meeting to order and begins with a moment of silence, asking participants to “reflect on why we are here.”

ESTABLISHING FOUNDATION: Pass out copies of Salon Guide asking one person each to read:

1. Purpose 2. Vision 3. Who and What We Are 4. Goals 5. Benefits for Participation 6. Dealing with Difference 7. Conversation Agreements

OPTIONAL -- TWO SHORT VIDEOS OR PRESENTATIONS: Begin with two short YouTubes or presentations (less than 5 min. each) relating to the Domain of the month, one from a center-right and one from a center-left perspective.

BREAK INTO GROUPS: If more than 12 people are present, break into groups of no more than 12 participants each.

DESIGNATE A HOST FOR EACH GROUP: One host per group. If more than two groups, ask for a volunteer group host.

DESIGNATE A TIMER FOR EACH GROUP: Under the “3 minute agreement,” the designated timer signals at 2:30 min. and then 3:00 min.

Hour One – Where are we?

CHECK IN ROUND RELATING TO THEME: Starting with co-host and going clockwise, up to three minutes per person “In relation to this month’s theme of _____, what brought you here tonight?”
OR, “Share a personal story about what makes this month’s theme important to you.”

DEEPENING ROUND: Starting with co-host and going clockwise, up to three minutes per person, ask “What would you like to add? What connections are you seeing?”

Hour Two – Where do we want to go?

POSSIBILITIES ROUND: Starting with co-host and going clockwise, ask “Relating to the theme of _____ and what you’ve heard so far, what possibilities for positive change do you see? In other words, if you were in charge, what would you do?”

OPEN DIALOGUE: Open conversation, one person speaking at a time, observing three minute rule.

Last 30 minutes

RECONVENE: Bring small groups back together into one large circle.

RECONNECTING ROUND: Observing a 1 minute rule, starting with co-host and going clockwise, each person offers a 1 minute “headline” of key thoughts -- co-host captures on flip chart

CHECK-OUT ROUND: Observing a 1 minute rule, starting with co-host and going clockwise, ask “What is one thing you’re taking away or one thing you’ve learned from tonight’s experience?”

CLOSING ROUND: Starting with co-host and going *counter-clockwise*, ask “What’s one-word that describes what are you thinking or feeling right now?”

MEETING ADJOURNED

INFORMAL SOCIALIZING

12 Transpartisan Salons on the 12 Domains in 2012

Third Wed. of each month 6 to 8:30pm, location TBD

1. Communications (media) - January
2. Security (safety and peacebuilding) - February
3. Creativity (arts and culture) - March
4. Land (Environment, Air, Food, and Water) - April
5. Energy - May
6. Innovation (science and technology) - June
7. Wellness - July
8. Learning (education) - August
9. Exchange (commerce, money and banking) - September
10. Governance (administration and coordination) - October
11. Reconciliation (justice) - November
12. Spirit (religion and spirituality) - December