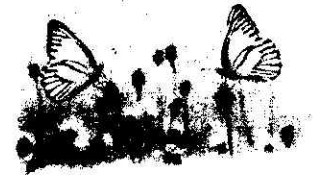


# ***Spiritual Conversation For People Who Are Not Christian***

## ***Some Opening Considerations***

- Spiritual conversation is a simple and flexible method, it does not require sharing about religious content
- When planning an activity for people who are not Christian, providing an atmosphere of welcome, trust and respect is important
- Feel free to experiment and be creative to discover what works best
- It is helpful to design an activity that is engaging and interesting but not intimidating
- Notice the needs of the participants, it may be okay to use some Christian language
- However, the explanation of spiritual conversation and each part of the activity can avoid use of explicitly religious language
- People of every religion (and no religion) have had an experience of: peace, love, honesty, respect, freedom, fulfilment, trust, joy, hope, fear, hurt, sadness, loss, loneliness, transformation, etc. (it is not necessary to mention “Jesus” or the “Paschal mystery”)
- Select a spiritual conversation topic that is meaningful to the participants



## ***A Case From the Experience of the Taipei Ignatian Spirituality Center Team***

Activity Participants: the participants work at a social service center for children (orphanage), some people provide direct care, some do administrative work, some are leaders; most participants are not Christian

Number of participants: 15 per session

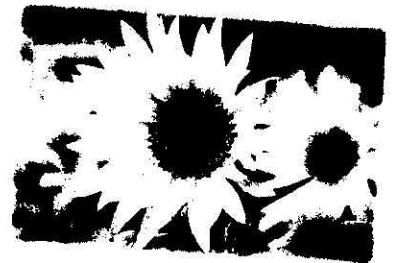
Team: 3 members of the spirituality center

Time: 9:30am-12:00noon

Location: one large room and three smaller rooms for spiritual conversation

## ***Session Content and Approximate Timeline***

- ~ Welcome (3 min.)
- ~ Introduce yourself with a card - ice breaker (15 min.)
- ~ Explain the purpose and format of spiritual conversation (20 min.)
- ~ Watch a video related to the mission of the organization (15 min.)
- ~ Break Time (20 min.)
- ~ Spiritual Conversation in small groups of five each (45 min.)
- ~ Large Group sharing (15 min.)
- ~ Closing (5 min)



## ***Welcome***

- The social service center director and spirituality center team (director and two small group facilitators) welcome participants in a simple way

## ***Ice Breaker – Pick a Card and Introduce Yourself***

- Each participant selects a card from the table
- In the big group, each person says their name, where they are from and explains why they chose their card (about 1 min for each person)

- This allows people to get to know each other and practice listening to each other
- The cards allow people to focus on something other than self

### ***Explain Spiritual Conversation***

- One of the small group facilitators explains spiritual conversation with a powerpoint
- Start with the needs of the participants rather than the format of spiritual conversation e.g. Ask participants to briefly reflect on their own experience. When talking with someone have I ever wondered if the other person has really understood what I said? Have I ever felt frustrated in a meeting because one person or a few people seemed to be dominating? Is there a way that is more fair, that allows each person to have a voice and feel respected?
- When explaining spiritual conversation, it is good to keep things simple and focus on basics
- A handout may be helpful
- The main point of the activity is to help people, rather than promote spiritual conversation



### ***Mission***

- What do the participants have in common?
- We showed a video that helps participants step back and reflect on the deeper purpose or mission of their work (e.g. a video showing the founder of the social service center, her past success and also her current weakness in old age)
- This video becomes something participants have in common and they may want to share about it during spiritual conversation
- Instead of a video, other methods can be used to help participants reflect on their mission, for example:
  - a) invite participants to reflect on their deepest desires in life and work *or*
  - b) invite participants to create a 3-minute play (drama) in small groups about a challenge they are facing; however, this requires trust and time to prepare, it may not be suitable for people who are meeting for the first time

### ***Break Time***

- This is important as it allows people to relax before the conversation
- If people are hungry, tired or feel rushed, this affects the quality of the conversation
- Provide food and drink if possible
- It also allows people to converse and get to know each other



### ***Spiritual Conversation In Groups of Five***

- Small groups (e.g. each group has 5 participants and 1 experienced facilitator)
- Provide comfortable chairs, air conditioning, etc.
- Provide a question is meaningful and that each person is able to share about, e.g. What is one experience with a child (orphan) that touched you deeply?
- It is helpful to provide the question in a written form

- The facilitator welcomes the participants and takes them through the spiritual conversation step by step, providing a safe and comfortable environment
- Even though it is the first time using spiritual conversation, people often share deeply (some may even cry) because they have the opportunity to share about something meaningful in life and do so in a safe environment where they feel respected



### **Large Group**

- After the small group spiritual conversation is complete, participants return to the large group
- Each person has a chance to share something that struck them about the activity today (about 1 minute for each person)
- People sometimes share an image or phrase from Round 3 of spiritual conversation
- It allows participants to get a sense of the conversation from the other small groups (similarities and differences)

### **Closing**

- A brief time to give thanks and invite people to use spiritual conversation in the future
- We had a closing blessing, but this is not necessary, look to the needs of the participants
- Each participant was given a small gift
- Group photo at the end

### **Other Notes:**

- There were challenges, e.g. some people had difficulty using active listening and began to look at their phone, some people shared about their own opinion in Round 2, one person was deaf but a sign language interpreter accompanied her and so she was able to participate
- In general, the sharing was quite profound
- No one indicated that they felt pressure related to religion
- A Key Point: the focus of the activity was on getting to know each other and sharing about service/mission rather than 'learning spiritual conversation', spiritual conversation was a tool rather than the focus
- We had 4 sessions each with about 15 people, so in total more than 60 people at the social service center participated
- The director of the social service center was pleased with these sessions, afterwards, she invited participants who were willing to provide their sharing in a written form, she plans to compile a booklet
- *Follow up: we also trained about 6 leaders from the social service center to be facilitators of spiritual conversation and to use it with staff (these training sessions were more in-depth and separate from the activity described above)*

