



EcoFaith Recovery



One-to-One Relational Conversations

#1 ACCESS Spiritual Power

#2 DEVELOP Relationships

#3 DISCOVER Our Stories

#4 MENTOR One Another

#5 ACT Together

#6 REFLECT On Our Actions

#7 RESTORE Balance





ONE-TO-ONES

Prepared by Rev. Susan Engh, who served as Director for Congregation-based Organizing for the ELCA from 2007-2018. Used by permission of Rev. Susan Engh.

The field of community organizing offers us a great tool for building or deepening collegial, congregational, and community relationships. The one-to-one relational meeting is a natural but uncommon conversation with someone you want to know or know better. It's natural because it flows from your own curiosity and your conversation partner's responses, rather than using a set of pre-determined questions or following anyone's pre-set agenda. It's uncommon because it requires intense listening and courageous inquiry, as you focus primarily on going deep into your conversation partner's story and resist turning it too much toward yourself. You will find that you and the person with whom you're visiting have things in common; and you should acknowledge that with brief accounts of your own experience, building trust and connection. But always return your focus to your partner with a question that can lead them deeper into their story.

Your objectives for having this conversation are simple and sincere. These objectives are listed in descending order of importance. In other words, #1 matters above all:

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- You want to establish or deepen a relationship with this person;
 - You want to learn some significant things about them, what makes them “tick”, what they value, who they really are, and what has brought them to this point in life;
 - You might find that you and your conversation partner have commonly held interests, goals or values that can lead you into new opportunities for collaboration and community building;
 - Through your inquiry and attentiveness this person might learn some things about him or herself that they didn't realize were true, leading to new clarity and self-appreciation.

Your conversation should last about 45 minutes; it's up to you to honor this time frame. If your conversation partner wants to learn more about you, they can schedule another time when the main focus will be on you. Or, if you both decide in advance to share equally, schedule an hour and a half, with one of you taking the lead for the first half and reversing the roles for the second half; this requires you to be disciplined about time and intent. Focusing on one person at a time allows each to feel deeply heard and valued. It also makes this kind of conversation uncommon and remarkable.

As noted earlier, you shouldn't go into the conversation with a bunch of pre-determined questions. However, it is wise to have one or two ice-breaker type questions in mind to begin with. You might start with something like: "What drew you to the position you have here?" Or, "what constitutes 'family' for you these days?" From there you should follow your curiosity, as well as the other person's response and direction, to get you deeper into their story, their values, vision, life and motivations. This move to go deeper takes courage on your part, a willingness to really listen and to ask what will feel like some risky questions, as well as to reveal some things about yourself. If you don't take risks and make the move to go deeper early on, you'll get into a pattern of asking surface type questions, and your conversation partner will be reluctant to share with you on a deeper level.

One way to determine what follow up questions to ask is to listen for the "breadcrumbs" or "pearls" people naturally drop that can lead you to a real treasure about who they are. These clues often come in the form of what seem like throw-away comments dropped when answering a question; comments like, "let's see, it was shortly after my divorce," or "my mother had just died and I was living in Atlanta..." Rather than gloss over the reference, dare to ask something about the thing they just mentioned in passing. It indicates to them that you're really listening, that you have courage, and that you truly care about the experiences, thoughts or feelings that mark significant moments in their life.

Also, be attentive to your gut-level resistance to probing deeper. Rather than hold back, take the risk of asking courageous questions. Instead of being an invasion of privacy, which is what you fear, courageous questioning actually builds trust and gives the person permission to share something deeply significant. To avoid turning this into therapy, offer no advice or analysis. Ask what they make of this aspect of their story, or share something about yourself that relates to their experience.

Sometimes, a ways into the one-to-one, you might need to introduce a new line of questioning, if the conversation gets dry or when you want to move in a different direction. Just don't get bogged down with the idea that you have to cover a lot of territory. Going deep into a few areas of their life, by following a natural course of conversation, is the real key. The following types of questions will encourage your conversation partner to go deeper into their story. (It also helps to insert follow-up questions like "why is that?" or, "can you give me an example?" or, "what was that like for you?")

Introduce one or two of these topics as needed. Never try to cover all this ground in one conversation!

- What brings you the most joy in your work?
- What are the greatest hurdles or challenges?
- What kind of impact do you want to have?
- How's it going — that work of making an impact?
- What is the biggest challenge you have faced in your life?
- How did you handle that challenge?
- How is that challenge still affecting you?
- What role has faith [or community, family, friends, or mentors] played in your life and work?
- What accomplishment or project are you most proud of?
- What assets did you bring to that enterprise?
- What did you learn (especially about yourself) in the process?
- What has created real disappointment for you in terms of wanting to make something happen?
- What were your (especially internal) barriers to success?

Your intent is to get them talking about more than facts, figures, names and events; to explore:

- What their ambitions and dreams are;
- What makes them angry, sad, or joyful;
- Why they are attracted to certain people, organizations, or communities;
- What has grabbed them most along their familial, educational, professional or faith journey;
- Why they spend their professional and personal time the way they do;
- What values and relationships they are willing to take risks and make sacrifices around.

After – and only after - your visit, jot some notes in order to retain the essence of the conversation. (Taking notes during alters the nature of the encounter.) You won't know the answers to all of these, but you'll know some things in a deep way about a few of them:

- o What does this person care most about and why?
- o What motivates them?
- o What do they get excited talking about?
- o How do they spend their time and why?
- o What assets does this person have and where do they get to exercise them?
- o What relationships does this person have and value and why?
- o What specific concerns or ideas does this person have?
- o Why is this person a member of this organization or community?
- o What would make this person feel very honored if they were invited into it?

Introduction to a Process for Carrying out One-to-One's

Like any practice or discipline, the most important part is to just do it. Many people who believe in the importance of One-to-One conversations (even long-time community organizers) can fail to follow through in practicing them regularly simply because they do not carve out the time, set a recurring process for inviting such intentional conversations, or get them onto the calendar. In addition, many report that their experience of such conversations, their leadership growth, and their ability to truly honor the gift of each conversation is hampered due to not taking time to reflect in advance of and after each conversation. This process and the accompanying worksheets are designed to support those who want to prioritize intentional relational conversations in using their calendar to develop a regular practice that actually enables them to do so.

Overview of the Following Worksheets

Decide whether you will use electronic or printed copies of the worksheets and where you will store them once you have filled them out. Then either print out a copy of this packet or make an electronic copy of this workbook. Some who choose to fill out the pages electronically will prefer to use Google Drive or Dropbox so they can access these pages immediately before and after their One-to-One conversations, such as, in the car or coffee shop before you head out.

Step #1) Use the One-to-One Brainstorming page to set a goal for the number of intentional One-to-One conversations you want to have during the coming month and schedule times for intentional outreach to make that happen. If possible, set a recurring event on your calendar for engaging in the important preparation needed for powerful One-to-Ones.

Step #2) Each week, use the second sheet to keep track of people you contacted and their responses to your requests for meetings. When scheduling meetings, be sure to also schedule at least 5 minutes to write and reflect in advance of the conversation and at least 5 minutes as soon as possible following the conversation to reflect upon what you learned.

Step #3) Set aside at least five minutes in advance of any intentional One-to-One conversation, preferably the day before hand, to fill out the Pre-reflection page regarding your interest in the conversation. You will need a new copy of this page for every One-to-One conversation you hold.

Step #4) Hold the intentional One-to-One conversation and then be sure to take at least 5 minutes to reflect and write about what you learned about the person (and yourself) through the conversation. You will need a new copy of this page for every intentional One-to-One conversation you hold.

Step #5) If at all possible, set up a time each month for longer writing and reflection on what you are learning about yourself, God, and others as a result of your engagement with this practice.

Name: **Phone Number:** **Email:** **Date Called:** **Notes:**

- Learn more at www.EcoFaithRecovery.org

#3) Pre-flecting on One-to-One Conversation in Advance

Person to be Visited: _____

Scheduled Date of Conversation: _____

What caused you to be interested in requesting a One-to-One with this individual at this time?

Do you have particular hopes or intentions associated with this conversation?

What are you curious about regarding this person? Can you imagine courageous questions you might be led to ask? (This is only to seed imagination, not script the conversation.)

List at least one way you are interested in growing through this conversation in your spiritual practice of One-to-One's?

How can you ground yourself spiritually, emotionally and physically so that you can best honor yourself and the other person in this conversation?

Complete this sentence: I feel like it will have been a good meeting if ...

#4) Post One-to-One Conversations Reflection

#_____

Person visited _____ Role or title _____
Date _____ Organizational/Community Affiliation(s) _____
Phone or extension _____ E-mail _____
This meeting was requested by: (check one) Me _____ Them _____ or Other _____

Memorable stories they told illustrating something important? Where did their **energy** rise?

Main areas of **interest, concern, call, motivation**? What **values** have they acted upon before?

What did you notice about this person's gifts, call, talents, relationships, assets, skills, background?

Capacity to act on their values now? (time, leadership ability, network, opportunity, agitation, etc)

Most courageous question I asked? **Most fruitful question** I asked? Where they led?

What might be the **basis of a deeper relationship**, follow up conversation, or a collaboration? What **additional questions** would you be interested in asking this person?

What **next steps** do I feel led take? How does this fit with my sense of call and priorities?

☐ Add those action items to the calendar now, if possible.

#5) Personal Reflection

In Conversation with _____ Date _____

My intention for this conversation was _____

Where did I sense the presence of God/Spirit/the holy? Where did my **energy** rise or fall?
Why?

What stories did I tell? Why? What is their significance?

What did I learn about my **interest, concern, call, or motivation**?

What did I notice or say that reflected **values** that are important to me?

Where was I courageous in this conversation? Or what kept me from being courageous?

What else felt important to me about the way I showed up for this conversation?

How would I like to grow or what would I like to practice in the future?

Workbook Feedback Form

Please let us know how we could make this workbook even more effective and supportive of your one-to-one conversations. You can either mail in this form at the address listed below or submit this form online here: <https://forms.gle/oZq8x1ojPnr8EkN8A>

Name (Optional): _____ Date: _____

Email (Optional): _____

How long have you used this workbook? _____

How many one-to-ones have you had using this workbook format? _____

What did you find **most helpful** about using this workbook? _____

What did you find **most challenging** about using this workbook? _____

How did using this workbook **impact** your one-to-ones? _____

On a scale of 1 - 10, how likely are you to **recommend** this workbook to others? (Circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What else would you like us to know?

Mail this form to:

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Contact Office@ecofaithrecovery.org with any questions.