

THE ART OF GROUP CONVERSATION



A powerful prelude to group work, the Art of Group Conversation offers a soft approach to group dialogue. As group members connect over shared memories and values, their sense of safety and interest in each other increases. This expands the group's ability to collaborate and communicate with greater ease.

Delores Lyons

Russanne Bucci



Dr. Corann Okoradudu

Dr. Okoradudu is a Full Professor of Psychology and Africana Studies. She worked with Dr. Rachel Davis DuBois and the Art of Group Conversation (AGC), and co-authored Dr. DuBois's autobiography *All This And Something More: Pioneering in Intercultural Education*. Delores Lyons is an AGC facilitator and a former social worker and television news reporter. Russanne Bucci is Director of AGC, which she learned from founder Dr. DuBois. Bucci is an interculturalist, educator, former Public Radio producer, and community organizer.

SHARING GROUP CONVERSATION WITH INTERCULTURALISTS

Earlier this month, A workshop on the Art of Group Conversation was presented at the SIETAR (Society of Intercultural Education, Training and Research) conference in Omaha, Nebraska.

While at the conference, Russanne Bucci reconnected with Dr. Mai Nguyen, a professor who is known for working as a bridge between cross-cultural communication and the field of neuroscience. Along with Shannon Murphy (co-founder of BrainSkills@Work, a consulting firm devoted entirely to applying neuroscience to more effectively develop diversity and inclusion and leadership competencies)



Russanne Bucci (left)

Dr. Mai Nguyen (right)

Dr. Nguyen has provided us with a scientifically based understanding of why the Art of Group Conversation has been considered so effective since its birth in the 1930s. [1,2]

For instance, the sharing of memories that marks a Group Conversation helps to override the fearful response that our brain automatically has when we encounter someone who we perceive as "different." As one group member shares a story, their brain lights up in a particular place and the brain of the story listener does the same. These mirror neurons promote bonding and the ability to feel empathy for another. A person our brain once saw as "the other" can become one of "us."



WELCOME ABOARD, HARPER!

AmeriCorps VISTA member Harper McDonnell joins the Art of Group Conversation team as our Marketing and Promotions Specialist. Harper is a recent graduate from Marymount University's Public Health Education and Promotion Master's program, with a focus on Mental Health. In her free time, you will find her playing drums, practicing yoga, sketching her latest inspirations, and spending time in nature with her dog. It is her goal to combine her worlds of health and design to grow within the nonprofit world. We're excited to see her turn her passions into actions and expand the impact of our work.

HOLIDAY SEASON, GRATITUDE, AND NEUROPLASTICITY

During the Thanksgiving holiday, many of us take time to acknowledge what we're grateful for. Research in neuroscience shows the active practice of gratitude triggers positive emotions, increases optimism and pleasure, and helps us feel less lonely and isolated.

Gratitude also encourages neuroplasticity - the brain's capacity to change and heal through new neural connections within our brain's "gratitude" circuits (Burton, 2016). When we practice gratitude, we activate these circuits in our brain that release dopamine and serotonin - the chemical messengers associated with feelings of happiness, bliss, rewards and motivation. [3] As you take time to savor the flavors of this holiday season, also take time to savor the things you are grateful for; you'll be helping your brain!

For additional insight on why gratitude is good for us and steps to cultivate gratitude practices, Check out this article ***Why Gratitude is Good*** by Robert Emmons, A leading scientific expert on gratitude. [4]

ARTS ACADEMY IN THE WOODS

Team members Paul, Russanne, and Carmel met many years ago as students and teacher at Arts Academy in the Woods, an arts focused middle and high school in Fraser, Michigan. They recently provided the school's faculty with a Group Conversation session and training in effective communication and Difficult Conversations with students. Thanks to principal Dr. Mike Mitchell for this rewarding opportunity!



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED!



UPCOMING EVENTS

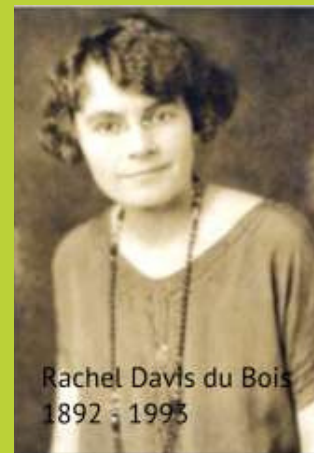
November 30th - The Nonprofit Roundtable of Advancing Macomb will participate in the Art of Group Conversation.

January 2023 - New paid facilitator training. Dates to be determined.

A TECHNIQUE THAT HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

The Art of Group Conversation, is a dialogue process that was designed just prior to WWII to address anti-Semitism in New York City classrooms. Dr. Rachel Davis DuBois, a Quaker and educator (1892-1993) observed that rapport would develop quickly among a group of strangers during a Group Conversation session. The dialogue led distrustful members to discover their common humanity.

DuBois used the technique in hundreds of schools, neighborhoods, places of worship and other organizations through the 1980s. Participants have exclaimed that this dialogue led them to feel a "sense of unity," "mutual interest" and "joy."



FOOTNOTES

1. Phuong, M. N. (2017). Intercultural Communication An Interdisciplinary Approach: Outskirts Press.
2. Casey, M. E., & Robinson, S. M. (2017). Neuroscience of Inclusion: New Skills for New Times. Outskirts Press.
3. Burton, L. (2016) The Neuroscience of Gratitude. https://www.whartonhealthcare.org/the_neuroscience_of_gratitude
4. Emmons, R. (2010, November 16) Why Gratitude Is Good. Greater Good Magazine. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good