

KIVA PROCESS

Purpose: To hold a different type of group conversation where participants learn from each other, listen first before they critique, and get the chance to speak and have their ideas considered. They also receive a written record of the group's conversation.

The Kiva process is a tool groups can use to hold group conversations which:

- Allow large numbers of participants to participate and have their voices heard
- Focus on small group dialogues as opposed to lectures by experts to large groups
- Encourage participants to actively listen rather than automatically critique or analyze what is being presented to the group
- Permit a larger number of perspectives to be included in the conversation
- Produce written documents that capture the group's knowledge and perspective on the issues discussed

Background

The KIVA Process comes from the culture of many Native Americans who have historically used certain practices to help them discuss important issues of the tribe. For many, the KIVA was an actual physical location to symbolize that what they were about to share was not ordinary, everyday work. It was upon this hallowed ceremonial ground that the tribe would come together for sacred work.

How it works

Within a two hour session we will solicit information from three focused groups of participants (Circle 1, 2 and 3) and one relatively large group (Circle 4) providing observational feedback of the three central circles.

The Kiva experience consists of a group of participants sitting in nested, concentric circles all facing in toward the facilitator in the center. The innermost group engages in answering (out loud) individually directed questions about an issue of which: (a) they have personal experience, (b) they have a degree of knowledge, (c) has affective and motivational facets, and (d) has some degree of deep personal meaning to them. After answering the initial questions (as the other circles listen and reflect), the participants change places, moving one circle closer to the center and the innermost circle moving outward. The same questions are asked of this new innermost circle group as the others listen, reflect, and synthesize their conceptualization of the issue/topic.

Circle 4 is comprised of everyone else in attendance, and they are periodically invited to comment on patterns and themes they observe in the 3 inner circles.

The concept is that you are able to gather a great deal of information by having this focused, facilitated process with participants representing different points of view.