

## The Kitchen Table (Roundtable) Discussion:

### What are its distinctive characteristics?

- Moderated group discussion.
- The approach models the dynamics of a conversation among family and friends.
- It is where we share ideas, trade news, share laughs, get to know each other
- We talk about what's important, talk about the future, make plans and commitments, speak from the heart.
- The discussion is focused around a central topic or question.
- Conversation is kept on track by all participants with assistance from the moderator

### What are the benefits of this approach?

- A comprehensive set of issues can be evoked.
- There is in-depth deliberation of key themes.
- Subtle insights are amplified to the point of clarity.
- Questions from participants to each other add insight.
- Different kinds of conversations take place during and after the sessions. These lead to different kinds of action.
- Networking and relationship building occurs.

### What process do we need to follow?

- Having only one key question or clear theme to discuss is important. Broad or multiple issues tend to be less productive.
- The moderator's role is to keep the focus squarely on the question or objectives that have been set.

At the beginning the moderator asks participants one by one to introduce themselves and state a simple one-sentence thought on the main question/topic

- The moderator then asks the group to open up the discussion. 'It's open season' seems often to get the conversation going
- The moderator helps identify the themes that emerge within the conversation and helps the participants focus on that theme for a while
- The moderator should encourage everyone to contribute. If one or two people dominate remind them the group needs to hear from others and ask the rest for their thoughts
- Disagreement among the panel is helpful to the conversation and should be encouraged
- Debate and argument about problem causality should be curtailed by reminding the panel of the session topic, summarizing the key thoughts so far and asking, 'What else?'
- Complaints or scepticism within the discussion are normal and need to be acknowledged. Those participants should be encouraged to move on by asking them what they want to happen (instead of the problem)
- The moderator should close by asking each of the panellists for an 'idea for action'

Notes can be taken by another participant for reporting back.

Roundtables and the Kitchen Table are an idea developed in collaboration with Rick Wolfe of <http://www.poststone.com/>

**Resources:**

Video. Roundtable, kitchen table

<http://youtu.be/0bO76roSwzg>

Kitchen table case:

<http://frymonkeys.com/solution-focused-dialogue-via-disagreement-at-the-kitchen-table/>

Roundtable Blog:

<http://frymonkeys.com/whats-your-communication-tool-for-strategic-change-2/>

Customer as resource:

<http://frymonkeys.com/first-discover-where-your-client-is-self-reliant/>

Client roundtable case. Children's Aid: <http://www.asfct.org/alankay.php>

Book 'Fry the Monkeys, Create a Solution' available as a (free) download at

<http://frymonkeys.com/wal6a7blu/>

