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SPARKER

from Potentials Realized

For more than two decades I have had the privilege of working with teams and groups all over the world. From community groups in remote hinterland of South America, to financial analysts on Bay Street, to government officials and members of the United Nations (UN), one thing is common - people love a good conversation.

For the last five years I've brought photo decks into my facilitation, training and coaching work with teams and groups. It's had tremendous impact. Whether it's been exploring the concept of vision with a team that feels like it's fallen off the rails, supporting a group of HR professionals exploring the question of what their role is, or encouraging group of more than 300 coaches to identify what's next for their work, photos have **expedited the conversation**. I continue to hear from group and team members how they were surprised by what new insights they gained, and deep conversations that photos and questions provoked.

For years I've used a number of photo decks in existence but always felt compelled to create a deck which was much more portable and varied in integrating not only photos but also questions. As a Certified Professional Coach for more than a decade, I know the power of a great question. **Conversation Sparker Cards™** have evolved out of the percolation of many ideas and experiences with groups.

What we hope will set this deck apart from others is:

IT'S PORTABILITY - the Conversation Sparker deck comes in a handy 3.5 x 5.75 inch size, small enough to be packed easily, and large enough to be visually appealing. It comes in a hard plastic casing, designed to protect it from the elements as well as slip into your briefcase or training bag.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO USE THE MATERIALS IN BOTH THE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL REALMS. You can access copies of the photos online under an annual license. The annual license enables you to use the materials virtually in webinars or teleclasses.

THE OPTION OF ADDING ON ADDITIONAL RESOURCES. In the future we will be producing additional decks including values cards, team coaching questions, and other themed Conversation Sparker Cards™.

A NUMBER OF RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES CUSTOMIZED FOR YOU. Please visit <http://www.conversationsparker.com> for more downloads and resources. You are invited to use code 4321 when asked.

THE GROUNDING IN TEAM AND GROUP COACHING PROCESSES. Coaching is grounded in goal setting and accountability. It is a conversation which provokes both awareness AND Action. These questions and photos are aimed to support you in clarifying your goals, enhancing awareness, and supporting action.

WORKSHEETS WHICH YOU CAN DOWNLOAD. Go to <http://www.conversationsparker.com> and click on the download link. Use access code 4321 to access a number of resources which accompany the material - audios, worksheets and videos.

And Now....

A bulk of our work has been with teams and groups around the world. We've seen the impact of images on virtual groups, teams in Central and Western Africa and in face to face sessions delivered in North America.

Photos cut across language, culture and many other differences which can exist in groups. Photos can be used individually and collectively.

What follows are some suggestions as to how you will want to use Conversation Sparkers in your team and group engagements.

Key principles in working with cards:

When working with groups in person, spread the cards out in a large area so people can touch and review the cards. Make sure bags, cords, and other tripping items are out of the way before you have them move!

- Give people time and choice - If you are working with a group provide a time limit for selection and encourage people to "go with their gut"
- Provide each participant with individual reflection time. You may want to design a handout (see sample handout on our website - www.conversationsparker.com) or have people reflect on and journal around these questions:

What made you select this card? OR What drew you to this card?

What's significant about it?

What's in focus?

What's out of focus?

How does this connect with the question at hand?

As you look at it, what new insights do you have?

- After individual time to reflect and write (usually a few minutes - 5-7 minutes), give people an opportunity to share with a partner, smaller group or larger group. The ability to verbalize and share the cards often leads to new ideas and insights

- o When sharing in smaller groups, you may want to budget 2-3 minutes per person.
 - o Depending on how well the group knows each other, time you have available, and size of group, consider pairings or groupings of 2-4.
 - o Larger group sharing can be very useful especially for teams or those groups who will be working together. Keep in mind the number of people who have to share and the amount of time available. Be specific with instructions on how people should share their card and the amount of time they have (i.e. 30 seconds, 1 minute).
- Consider the stage at which the group is at. What level of connection exists? What level of risk might this be interpreted as? You can download an overview of the stages of group and team development and supports which coaches and facilitators can offer at each stage at our website.

Activities at Different Stages of the Engagement:

Conversation Sparker Cards™ can be used throughout any team, group or individual engagement. What follows are some suggestions on how to use the decks. Cards can be spread out with each person picking a card, or specific cards (such as the question cards) can be used and posted around the room, or at specific tables, to encourage dialogue.

Warm ups:

Select a card which represents...

- ...what you are bringing that's unique to this group?
- ...what's the best thing you could get out of the current process?
- ...your current thinking about this topic?
- ...us as a team right now?

Goal Setting:

What's the card that represents your goals?

What might get in the way?

What could be an opportunity?

What could derail you?

What's the card that looks like success for you?

Closure:

What's the photo which represents your next step?

What's the photo which represents your key learning?

What might get in the way of your next steps?

What's going to support you in being successful?

What's going to keep this alive for you?

When working with leaders - what card represents what you want to take back to your team?

When working with teams

Select the card which represents what you bring to the team

Select the card which represents:

... the biggest opportunity for the team

...the biggest risk

...what is valued

...what is the priority for the team

...what's not being said

What is the question this team needs to consider, or explore, right now?

When working with classes

Select the card which connects you with what you have learned today

Select the card which represents the energy you are leaving with

What card represents where you want to be one year from now, five years from now, ten years from now....?

Six Quick Activities:

Just as the name implies, it is my hope that the Conversation Sparker Cards™ will create the spark for deeper dialogue. Here are six ways you may wish to incorporate them into your next conversation.

1. SELECT A CARD

Size: 1 to hundreds

Facilitator/Coach/Trainer will lay out the cards on a large table or in an area where all the cards can be seen by participants. It can be useful to have it on a freestanding table so people can move around it and see the photos from different perspectives.

You may want to include cards with photos or also include the cards with questions.

A **virtual twist** - Have group members select a photo from those that you have shown on your whiteboard, or sent as PDF form. A digital license can be purchased online at <http://www.conversationsparker.com>.

Give each person a few minutes to select the card. Use the worksheet. Allow time for sharing.

2. CREATE A VISION:

For individuals or individual team members:

For individuals - Have individuals select a photo which represents their vision (for their work, leadership, business, career etc). Give them time during the session to make notes on it, or have them journal their ideas before your next conversation point.

For the team - Have a team create their own story line using the photos included in the deck. What are significant milestones in the past and/or future?

Team members can also create their own drawings using blank cards.

3. CONVERSATION SPARKING QUESTIONS

The main Conversation Sparker Card deck comes with 22 questions , some with photos, some plain.

You can use these questions in several ways:

1. Have each person pick a card for individual reflection
2. Team leaders can select a card for the team to be in dialogue around that week at their staff meeting
3. Each team member can select a card which they want to spark conversation in the team around.

4. CREATING CONNECTION:

At the start of the program have individuals select the card which represents what they uniquely bring to the group. Have them introduce themselves to the larger group with this card, providing the story behind it.

5. WHAT'S POSSIBLE?

If you could make a change right now and follow your dream, what would be possible? Select the card which represents what's possible! Have each group member select their own photo and share their story. What would it take to make this happen?

6. CELEBRATORY CLOSURE

The old adage says "All good things must come to an end". Our group and team members remember the start and end of things. As part of your closure activities, get people to select the card which represents what they are leaving the program with. Alternatively, you can have them select the Question card which they want to carry forward.

42 Questions for Using the Conversation Sparker™ Cards

The main Conversation Sparker™ deck includes 48 photos and 22 questions to "spark" conversation.

These questions can be used as part of a team meeting to "spark" dialogue for all group members. Coaches may want to have individuals select a question that will be their focus before the next conversation. In a workshop or retreat, the questions can be used as an energizer or a conversation prompter over lunch or breaks.

The questions in the main deck are:

1. What's your vision?
2. What do you want to celebrate?
3. What do you bring that makes you unique?
4. What are your strengths?
5. What opportunities exist?
6. What will success look like?
7. What could get in the way?
8. What do you need to say NO to?
9. What's Your WHY?
10. What Else?
11. Why Not?
12. What's the 30,000 foot view? What's the view from the weeds?
13. If you need to collaborate?
14. What are you committed to, no matter what?
15. What relationships are important?
16. What's the priority?
17. What inspires you?
18. What's next?
19. What's the flip side?
20. What's another perspective?
21. What might be a roadblock?
22. What's possible if you collaborate?

Relationships:

23. What do we connect around?
24. What do we both value?
25. What does the relationship need?
26. What photo represents what we want to create together?

For Teams:

27. What do you aspire to?
28. What's a priority right now?
29. What's important?
30. What's valuable?
31. What's in the way?
32. What's not being said?

33. What's not valued here?
34. What's not a priority?
35. Our greatest opportunity is...
36. Our greatest risk right now is...

Exploring expectations:

37. My hope for this program is
38. My concern for this program
39. What I want to get out of this process is...
40. My main goals are represented by....

General Questions:

41. What photo represents the extreme opposite of your current thinking? What new ideas can you glean from this perspective?
42. My best _____ ever looks like (replace the _____ with team, day, job, leader, coach etc)

For more information and resources please visit at
<http://www.conversationsparker.com>

A note of thanks:

This deck came together with the help of several individuals. The photos have been captured throughout decades of my travels as well as the travels of photographer ChelseaShell, and Romeo DeFreitas of the Guyana Marine Sea Turtle Conversation Society. The photos and booklet were critiqued by Matthew and Andray, Grant and Margaret. Thank you for your feedback.

The work has been inspired and shaped by the thousands of individuals, groups and team members I have worked with since the late 80s. Your stories and learning continue to keep me sparked and energized. Thank you!

To the thousands of coaches I have worked with in the last ten years, thank you for making me part of your reading, learning and conversation. I hope that you find this resource a valuable tool in the work you do and the conversations you spark.

For more information:

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Follow us:

Facebook: EffectiveGroupCoaching

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Our other websites:

Group Coaching Essentials - For Coaches:
<http://groupcoaching.blogspot.com>

Potentials Realized (For Teams and Leaders)
<http://www.potentialsrealized.com>

From12many.com - Related website for Jennifer's
book From One to Many: Best Practices for Team and
Group Coaching (Jossey-Bass, 2013)

About Potentials Realized and Jennifer Britton

Potentials Realized is a Canadian based Performance Improvement company, specializing in coaching skills training, leadership development and team work. Founded by Certified Coach and Performance improvement specialist in 2004, we have designed award winning training programs. Jennifer is considered a thought leader in the area of group coaching and has written the best selling book Effective Group Coaching (Wiley, 2010) and her most recent From One to Many: Best Practices for Team and Group Coaching (Jossey-Bass, 2013). Jennifer has worked with teams and groups in more than eighteen countries globally, and is a former leader with the UN. Since 2004, she has trained thousands of coaches through her Continuing Coach Education programs - Group Coaching Essentials™, and the Group and Team Coaching Intensive.

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