

"World
Peace"

Diversity

"Friendship"

"Happy
homes"

Creative

A connecting conversati on

"World
citizenship"

For a connected
neighborhood

June 29, 2025

Boxtel

"Guest
freedom"

"The Soul "

"COLLAB
ORATION"

"Prayer
&
Meditation
"

"Junior
youth
groups"

"Social
action"

My

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A-CONNECTING-DISCOURSE.COM

&



"Gemeens-
schaps
opbouw"



"Ultimately, the power to transform the world is brought about by love, love that comes from relationship with the divine, a fervent love among the members of a community, love that extends without limitation to every human being. This divine love, ignited by the Word of God, is diffused by enlightened souls through loving conversations, which bring about new receptivity in human hearts, opening minds to moral convictions and loosening the grip of preconceived norms and social systems, so that they can gradually take on a new form befitting the requirements of humanity's maturity. You are channels of this divine love; let it flow through you to all who cross your path. Inspire with it every neighborhood and social space in which you move to build capacity to channel the society-building power of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation."

The Universal House of Justice, letter July 22, 2020

Welcome to 'A Connecting Conversation'

Welcome to The Walnut in Bostel! Today we are getting down to business to strengthen the quality of connection with our neighborhood/community. 'A connected neighborhood' starts with getting to know each other better, having connecting conversations and building a vital local community together. In doing so, of course, we don't start from "zero. All of us already have contacts where we live and even without us there is often already a lot happening in the neighborhood; many opportunities for cooperation. Within the Bahá'í community, as the organizer of this day, there is a lot of connection and worldwide also a lot of experience with community building. We would like to strengthen that process locally. Today we are going to learn more about that together. Using "connecting conversation" as a skill in which we build capacity.

Program times are as follows:

10:00 Preliminary discussion/
coffee & tea 10:30 Start of program
12:30 Potluck lunch
14:00 Continuing program
16:00 Plenary & closing 16:30
After discussion/ drinks

Voluntary contribution



0. Connecting with your neighborhood

Municipality name:.....

Village/Town name:.....

Name neighborhood/ district:.....

- How many neighbors have my/our house key? ____
- How many neighbors do I visit my house or they visit mine? ____
- How many people in my neighborhood do I know by name? ____
- How many people do I ever chat with? _____
- How many people in my neighborhood do I recognize by face? _____
- How many people do I greet on the street? ____
- How many people in my neighborhood/neighborhood don't yet? ____

Learning question

Do you have a learning question for the day?

Possibly it is on one or more of these dimensions?

- Knowledge and insight:
- Attributes and attitudes:
- Skills and Abilities:

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1. Urgency of connected neighborhoods

"[M]any day that passes we also see the state of the world becoming more desperate and divisions more intense. Escalating tensions within societies and between nations affect people and places in myriad ways. This demands a response from every conscientious soul. [...] Loving concern must lead to sustained efforts to build communities that offer hope instead of despair, unity instead of conflict." (*letter Ridván 2024*)

"Shoghi Effendi has clearly described how a process of "increasing deterioration in human affairs" is taking place in parallel with another process, a process of integration, through which the "Ark of human salvation," the "ultimate refuge" of society, is being built. We rejoice to see in every country and in every region true practitioners of peace engaged in building this refuge.

We see it in every story of a heart lit by the love of God, a family opening its home to new friends, co-workers using the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to address a social problem, a community strengthening a culture of mutual support, a neighborhood or village learning to initiate and sustain the actions necessary for its own spiritual and material progress..." (*letter Ridván 2024*)

- What does it say?
- What does this mean for you and your neighborhood/neighborhood?

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2. Deepening: Connection Unraveled

1. Connection with yourself

- What does "connecting with yourself" mean to you? How do you do it?

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"Cast your eyes upon yourselves, that you may find Me steadfast in you, powerful, mighty and at-rest."

(Note: All quotes are from Bahá'u'lláh unless otherwise noted)

2. Connection at the physical level

- What does "physical connection" mean to you? How do you do it?

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"If the bond is only physical and nothing more, then it is certainly only temporary and must inevitably end in separation." (*'Abdu'l- Bahá*)

"As long as no external obstacle intervenes, the body as a whole will continue to reflect the light of the soul and be sustained by its power."

3. *Social-emotional connection*

- What does "social-emotional connection" mean to you? How do you do it?

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"Be not content to show friendship in words alone, but let your heart burn with loving affection toward all who may cross your path."

"Be worthy of your neighbor's trust and look upon him with a radiant and loving countenance."

4. *Connection mentally*

- What does "mental connection" mean to you? How do you do it?

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"This gift [of the mind] gives man the ability to discern truth in everything, leads him to what is right and helps him to discover the secrets of creation."

"Be united in deliberation, be one in thought."

5. *Connection spiritual*

- What does "spiritual connection" mean to you? How do you do it?

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"Each one sees in the other the beauty of God reflected in the soul, and when one discovers this point of similarity, one is drawn to each other in love. This love will make all people the waves of one sea, this love will make them all the stars of one sky and the fruit of one tree. This love will bring the realization of pure harmony, the basis of true unity." (*'Abdu'l-Bahá*)

6. Connection socially

- What does "social connection" mean to you? How do you do it?
- What is social connection without spiritual connection?

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"One does not boast of loving one's homeland, but sets an honor in loving the whole world. The earth is but one country, of which all men are the citizens."

"All human beings are created to propagate an ever advancing civilization."

- **Brief reflection:** what do you take from this home/to your neighborhood/environment?
- Time for creative processing

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3. Deepening: having the conversation

"[G]a deal with all people in a spirit of kindness and comradeship. If thou art aware of a certain truth, if thou possess a gem which others do not yet possess, let them share in it in the kindest, most benevolent terms. [...] Pleasant speech is the magnet of man's heart. She is the bread of the mind, she gives meaning to words, she is the source of the light of wisdom and understanding..."

"Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or interpreter should carefully convey his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression each word makes is clearly visible and perceptible. One word can be likened to fire, another to light, and the influence exerted by both is visible in the world. Therefore, an enlightened and wise man ought first of all to speak with words as mild as milk [...] It befits a thoughtful and wise man to speak with the utmost gentleness and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may lead everyone to attain what is worthy of man's state."

- What do you pick up from these two quotes that you can take away today (and beyond) as you practice with this?

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Bonus: a specific form of conversation

"[L]et every believer turn his gaze to 'Abdu 'I-Bahá. [...] To all without distinction - ministers, scientists, workers, children, parents, exiles, activists, spiritual, skeptics - he bestowed love, wisdom, comfort, whatever one's specific need might be. **As he elevated their souls, he stimulated their assumptions, reoriented their views, expanded their consciousness and directed their energies.** He showed such compassion and magnanimity in word and deed that hearts were utterly transformed. No one was rejected. [...] Keep his example in mind and fix your gaze upon it, let it be your inner guide in the pursuit of the goal of the Plan." (*Letter Riḍván* 2011)

- Can you think of opening words of sentences that you could use to introduce each of these aspects in a conversation?
- Elevating the soul:
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- Stimulate assumptions:
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- Refocusing views:
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- Expanding consciousness:
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- Focusing forces:
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Just try (today and beyond) what happens when you build a conversation sequentially with these elements

4. A connecting conversation: Unity

A garden in which plants of many colors and scents stand together is a delight to the eye. And though the flowers differ from one another, each is refreshed by the same rain and warmed by the same sun. This is also true of humanity. It consists of many races and colors. But all come from the same God, and all have the same origin. The diversity within the human family should be a source of harmony, just as in music, where different notes blend together to create a perfect chord.

Unity is necessary for existence. Love is the fundamental cause of life. In the material world, the elements of everything are held together by the law of attraction. The law of attraction brings certain elements together to form a beautiful flower. But when that force of attraction falls away, the flower will decompose and cease to exist. So it is with humanity. Attraction, harmony and unity are the forces that hold humanity together.

Bahá'u'lláh has drawn the circle of unity and created a design for the union of all the peoples of the world. We must do our utmost until we have the reality of unity in our midst. When we encounter people of a different race, nationality, religion or belief from our own, we must not allow these differences to create barriers between us. We should see them as differently colored roses in the beautiful garden of humanity, and be happy that we are with them. (*From: Ruhi Book 2, H2, §6*)

- **Start of the conversation:** What in this description about the concept of unity touches you? How can you contribute to more unity in your own neighborhood/environment?

"The tabernacle of unity is set up; do not regard one another as strangers. Ye are the fruit of one tree and the leaves of one branch."

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."

- **Brief reflection on the conversation:**
 - How do you "score" this conversation in terms of connection? (scale 1-100) What makes you give this score?
 - What will you take home/to your neighborhood from this?
 - Time for brief creative processing

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5. Bonus: discussing 'God

1. *The divine in yourself*

- Do you recognize this connection? How do you strengthen this connection?

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"In you I laid the essence of My light" "He who knows himself, knows God." (Qur'an)

2. *The divine in everything and everywhere around you*

- Do you recognize this connection? How do you strengthen this connection?

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"Everything, according to its own ability, exhibits and expresses the knowledge of God. So powerful and universal is this revelation that it encompasses all things, visible and invisible."

"How brilliant are the lights of knowledge that shine in an atom and how vast the oceans of wisdom that wave in a drop!"

3. *The transcendent Divine*

- Do you recognize this connection? How do you strengthen this connection?

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"The birds of man's heart, however high they ascend, can never expect to reach the heights of His unknowable Essence."

"I testify, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know and worship Thee."

4. *God in knowable form: the Manifestation of God*

- Do you recognize this connection? How do you strengthen this connection?

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"Since the door to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days is thus closed to all beings, the Source of infinite grace [...] made these radiant Jewels of Holiness from the realm of the spirit appear in the noble form of the human temple and reveal themselves to all men, that they may communicate to the world the secrets of the immutable Being and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence."

- A "covenant neighborhood" with or without the negotiable dimension of spirituality/deity: does it make a difference? Can you elaborate?

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- **Brief reflection:** what do you take away from this to your home/ neighborhood/ environment?

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6. Connecting conversation: Service in your neighborhood

We all want the world to be a more beautiful place. The idea of people living together in harmony sometimes seems far away, yet we believe it is possible if more and more people contribute something positive to their environment. Many of us feel deep inside the desire to mean something to others, even if it is sometimes small. You don't have to do everything at once; everyone does it in their own way and at their own pace. And together it is easier and more fun than alone.

When you look at youth, you often see a lot of energy and enthusiasm. At the same time, we have quite a few worries: about the world, about our future, about all that is coming our way. Life asks a lot of us, and sometimes it can be quite overwhelming. But it is precisely at this stage in your life that you discover how much strength and potential you have.

More and more young people find that they can focus their energy on two things: growing as a person and doing something good for their environment. The two actually go hand in hand. By developing yourself, you can help others better, and by working with others, you learn new things yourself. That gives satisfaction and makes your life more meaningful.

What you do for the community doesn't have to be grand. It can be something simple, like organizing a children's activity, offering a listening ear, or setting up a project together with others. The great thing is: you don't have to do it alone. You are part of a group, and together you can support each other, learn from each other and have fun in what you do. That strengthens friendships and keeps you from getting stuck in things that don't really matter.

Of course, there are all kinds of influences that give you direction - some positive, like justice, knowledge and love. Others can actually distract you, such as materialism or selfishness. It's good to be aware of these and choose what helps you move forward.

When we think about how to change society, we see that it is not just about material things. Spiritual growth is just as important. When the two come together, something truly beautiful is created. You can compare it to a lamp: material progress is the lamp itself, spiritual progress is the light in it.

By being active together in the neighborhood, you learn to work together with different people, young and old. You discover how important it is to seek unity, support each other and pursue a goal together. You don't have to do it perfectly - as long as you are willing to learn, try and help each other.

There are also courses and meetings from within the Bahá'í community where you can think about these issues with others and gain practical skills. In this way you can mean more and more to those around you, and along the way you get help from people who have been participating a little longer. That way everyone grows, and together you shape a connected neighborhood. *(Edited from Ruhi Book 2, H3 §9-10)*

- **Start the conversation:** What image does this conjure up for what it could be like in your neighborhood/neighborhood? How can you contribute to that? What do you need in order to do so?

Short reflection

- How do you 'score' this conversation in terms of connection? (scale 1-100) What makes you give this score?
- (How) can you strengthen the connection next time?
- What will you take home/your neighborhood from this exercise?

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7. Exercise: Uplifting conversation

Choose a quote:

"Be worthy of your neighbor's trust and regard him with a radiant and loving countenance."

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."

"Deal with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendship and comradeship."

- What does it say?
- What does it mean for society?
- What does it mean for me/you?

Brief reflection

- How do you "score" this conversation in terms of connection? (scale 1-100) What makes you give this score?
- What do you take home/your neighborhood from this exercise?

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Final reflection:

- What did this day yield in relation to my learning question?

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- What will I take back home/to my neighborhood/environment?

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- What is my next step and what/who do I need to do it?

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- How was this day for me? Do I have any suggestions for next time?

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Email reflections

Name:



"The task of building a mature, peaceful, just and united world is a huge undertaking in which every people and nation must be able to participate. The Bahá'í community welcomes all to join this endeavor as protagonists in a spiritual enterprise that can overcome the forces of disintegration that erode the old social order and tangibly shape an integration process that will lead to the unfolding of a new order in its place."
(letter November 28, 2023)

"Wereld
vrede"

"Eenheid in
verscheiden
heid"

"vrícwdS-Ghap"

"WETENS HAP
& RELIGIE"

"Hoe gaat het
met jou?"

"Kinder
educatie"

"Happy
homes"

"Liefde"

Creative

*Dank
for your
komst*



"Eén-zijn"

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.....,

"Gast-
vrijheid"

"Persoonlijke
en sociale
transformatie"

"Gebed &
Med%atie"

"SAMEN-
WERKING"

"De Ziel"

"Jeugd-
groepen"