

**What is a conversation?**

- Characteristics
- Aims
- Requirements



**Why a conversation?**

**TO UNDERSTAND LIFE**

- Talk with thought
- Family and other strangers
- Obscure language

➤ **Be thoughtful**

**TO CHANGE MENTALITIES**

- Tone of a conversation
- Impact of technology on our minds
- Exotic food

➤ **Be humble**

**TO BREAK MONOPOLIES**

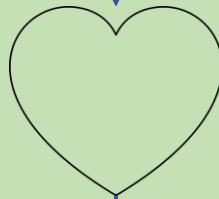
- Narrowing minds
- Social exclusion
- Solutions to insoluble problems

➤ **Be open**

**TO CHANGE LIFE**

- Relationships
- New combinations of professions
- Life as experiments

➤ **Be hopeful**



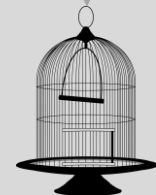
**Destructive conversations**



TO WIN ARGUMENTS



TO FORCE AGREEMENT



TO EXCLUDE



TO DISTORT LIFE

# What is a conversation?

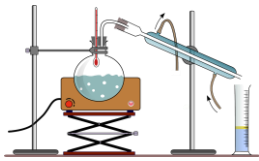
## CHARACTERISTICS

Exchange of information that **changes you**.



Talk with thought

Careful selection of ideas, anecdotes tied together with a general thought that can be discussed **to increase understanding**.



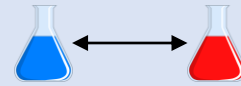
Experiment.  
No guarantee for results.

A conversation puts you face to face with individuals and all their human complexity.

- **Makes you conscious** of all different views, and the difficulty of living in peace.
- **Gives hope**, every time the conversation was successful and resulted in mutual respect.

**Compare: What is talk?**

Exchange of information.



Loose ideas, anecdotes that are filed away in **old pigeonholes**.



## AIMS

**Conversations to:**

- Amuse
- Distract
- Impact life (work, love and friendships, beliefs, ...) positively
- Try to understand life
- Impact life negatively



😊 **Ordinary people can make big changes** by improving their relationships (opening up to strangers, being more adventurous, creating equality), and by escaping the narrowness of specialist jobs, the professional boredom, the isolation by jargon.



☹️ **Intimidation & persuasion.** The powerful have always known they are threatened by conversation. Words can be exploited by using rhetoric, or packaging to frighten, to brainwash, or to push something through. Winning an argument becomes the substitute for discovering the truth. Forcing others to agree the source of self-esteem.

## REQUIREMENTS

Willing to think for yourself and to say what you think. Courage.

# Why a conversation?

TO BETTER UNDERSTAND LIFE ➤ TO CHANGE MENTALITIES ➤ TO BREAK KNOWLEDGE MONOPOLIES

Most of history silence has been the ideal. Now, we feel like a fool when we can't think of anything to say. However, **talk without thought is empty.**

Conversation challenges one's ideas, makes one aware how much one owes to others (intellectual, moral, emotional). It is the best way of creating the conditions for equal rights and respect. **Conversation can change mentalities, laws cannot.**

Stay motivated and keep believing change is possible. Don't become a cynic, believing that conflict is the essence of life. **Keep on searching for new meetings.**



**TIP. Learning how to talk to strangers** and how to accept criticism, one can best do in the safe environment of the family (didn't choose each other, variety of ages, and maybe even social classes, and nationalities).

**ⓘ Obscure language.** Accurate scientific descriptions (when carried so far it becomes jargon), as well as rhetoric, and even plain talk (when standards get rejected) can become incomprehensible to the non-initiated.

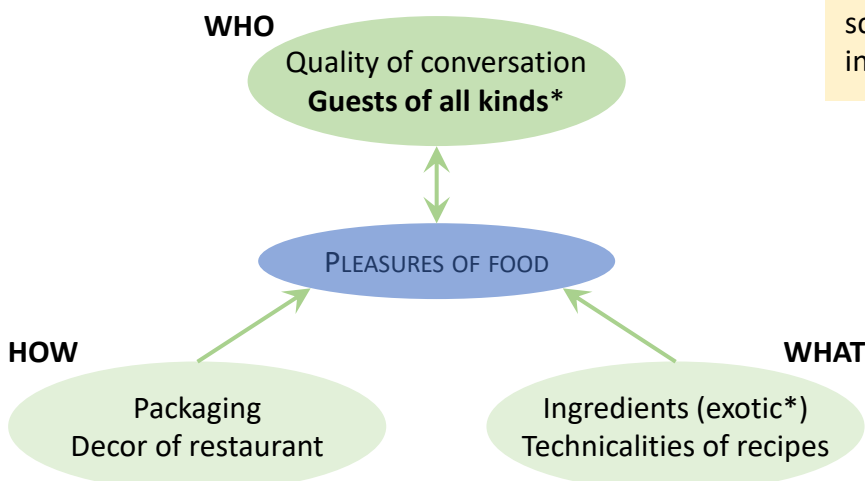
Conversations on the borderline of what you understand/don't understand, with people different from yourself are particularly valuable. **Conversation has to explore new territory\* to become an adventure.**



**TIP. To solve 'insoluble' problems,** change one of the three attributes of a conversation:

- About WHAT?
- With WHOM?
- HOW?

(= the style of the conversation: scientific, rhetoric, discriminating, intimidating, ...).



# Why a conversation?

TO BREAK KNOWLEDGE MONOPOLIES ➤ TO CHANGE LIFE

## How is work affecting the brain?

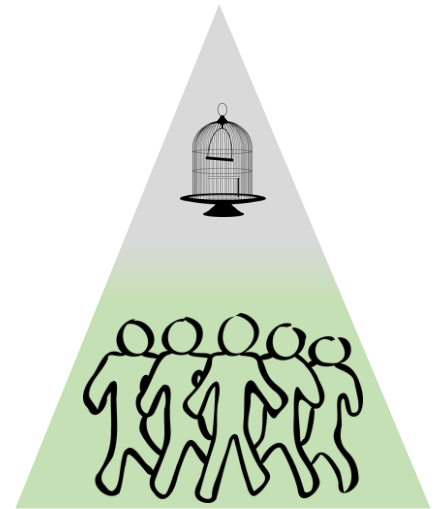


The factory worker:  
*I never found pleasure in talking about anything much except sports.*

The finance expert & millionaire:  
*When I wanted to help the poor, I discovered I was not able to talk to ordinary people.*



The TV producer:  
*The job is not using all my intelligence, it is narrowing my mind.*



We have nearly all of us become experts. Work increasingly consists of talk but it is **narrowing our minds and conversations**.

Specialisation, though valuable and necessary, has ill-effects. It needs to be balanced by breaking with the **monopolies of knowledge**.

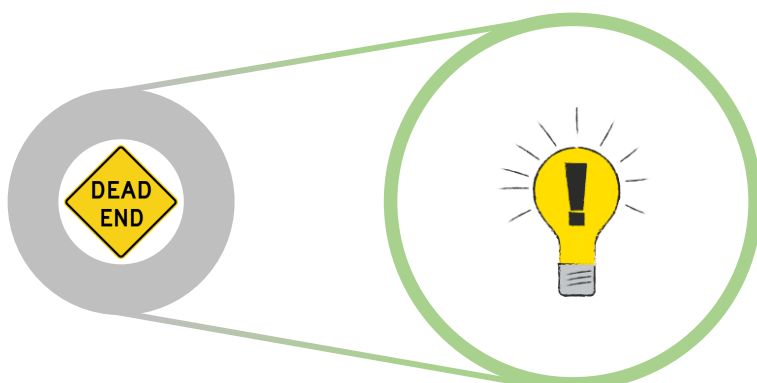
We invented the profession as a secret society with a monopoly of knowledge. But humans changed. The more we see of the world, the broader is our range of curiosity. Work should change as well. Conversation can demystify professions, stimulate curiosity and ideas to **remodel the world of work**.

**Social exclusion.** Lack of confidence when talking about certain topics does not only apply to the poor but to all whose mind-set is confined to a single profession.



**TIP. To create new combinations of professions.** An alternative to postgraduate or management training could be a series of conversations with several professionals, while accompanying them a few months to:

- learn their language
- experience the stresses and problems
- see how many decisions are inevitable/arbitrary



# Why a conversation?

TO CHANGE MENTALITIES > TO CHANGE LIFE



Technology has encouraged many people to talk as though there was a solution to every problem, creating a **divide between optimists and pessimists**.

But after endless series of experiments, it has become obvious that all technologies can have bad as well as good results, unexpected disasters as well as unexpected benefits.

↓

People seeing life as a series of experiments

**i** Where technology can bring a fundamental shift in our view on the future is by training us to cope with failure, and to get beyond the over-simple expectation of success. Technology has managed to deal with failure more sensibly than we have dealt with failure in our political or private lives, perhaps because failure is regarded by engineers as their central problem.



**TIP.** The tone of a conversation has a great influence on its content, and on the agenda, humans set themselves.

By Nele Schmitz

Adapted from:

*Conversation. How talk can change our lives.* By Theodore Zeldin, 1998

IMAGES: pixabay.com