

Title: **Relationship Building: Paired Conversation**

**Getting to know each other better and beginning to explore the change work at hand.**

Goal: This exercise allows people to talk about themselves and to share their ideas and experiences with each other. When we know each other and understand each other better we develop a foundation for working through some of the difficult conversations that come up when we are looking at deep change. People share more in paired conversations than in larger groups. Paired conversations form the foundation for strengthening relationships by allowing people to get to know each other personally.

Description: **Logistical Instructions:** In pairing people up and providing an opportunity for them to have paired conversations with several people, you can organize the logistics of pairing and moving in a number of ways—depending on group size and room capacity.

- **Moving Twos** (for small groups): Have the group count off by twos. Have the participants remain at their tables with the “twos” moving over to the next “two” seat for each question while the “ones” remain seated.
- **Line Dance:** Where there is a small area for moving around, we can have everyone line up in two lines. One line remains stationary and the other line moves after each question to allow for a new pairing. The moving line moves in the same direction after each question to allow a new pairing. The last person in the moving line will then have to move to the other end of the line to have a new partner. This will allow each person to talk with someone new for each question.
- **Carousel** (Ideal for a large space): Have the participants form two circles—one circle within the other—with participants in the two circles facing each other.

**Paired Conversation Timing:**

Tell them you will give them a topic and time to discuss it with each other. Allow each person in the pair ample discussion time—you will need to stay tuned in to the group and listen to their buzz. You do not want to cut off discussion and you don't want to let it go too long. Sometimes conversations that require more thought get off to a slower start; don't rush things along.

**Discussion topics:**

1. How did you get your name?
2. What brought you into caregiving?
3. What are your biggest frustrations?
4. What makes it worth it?
5. To paraphrase Maya Angelou *"I did the best I could with what I knew, and when I knew better I did it better."*  
What does this quote mean to you?

In leading these conversations, it is important to start the series with an easy, fun topic that allows everyone to share comfortably. Questions should move toward the topic you wish to open for discussion in your general session. You should limit your topics to four or five questions, with the last one bringing the topic into focus for you.

- Discussion:
- Start by asking the group how these discussions felt. If they are talking with people they already know, did they get to know each other better?
  - Then go right to the heart of the discussion, the last topic, and ask people what they thought about it.
  - **Closing points:** In most organizations there is ample talk about the task at hand and little opportunity to get to know each other personally. This can make for an isolated environment where people feel hesitant to bring forward their best thinking or their questioning selves. In organizational change work, it is crucial that people feel free to ask their questions in an honest dialogue. This exercise encourages and allows people to start to get to know each other differently and to begin to engage in honest dialogue together.

**Time needed: Approximately 20 to 30 minutes**