

# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Preface</b> .....   | xiii      |
| Attributions and Gratitude .....   | xiii      |
| <b>Introduction:</b>   |           |
| Origins of the Method .....  | 1         |
| <b>Part 1: Theory and Practice</b>   |           |
| Ch. 1. Why Do Organizations Need Conversations?.....                       | 6         |
| Ch. 2. The Focused Conversation Method: An Overview.....                   | 17        |
| Ch. 3. The Structure of the Focused Conversation Method....                | 24        |
| Ch. 4. How Science Supports Focused Conversations.....                     | 32        |
| Ch. 5. Preparing a Focused Conversation from Scratch.....                  | 38        |
| Ch. 6. Leading a Focused Conversation .....                                | 46        |
| Ch. 7. Troubleshooting: Common Problems and<br>Suggested Solutions .....   | 56        |
| <b>Part 2: Sample Conversations</b>  |           |
| <b>Introduction to the Sample Conversations</b>                            |           |
| <b>Section A. Conversations for Preparing and Planning</b> .....           | <b>65</b> |
| A1. Preparing a Short Presentation .....                                   | 67        |
| A2. Getting Input into Writing a Response to a Book<br>or Article .....    | 68        |
| A3. Preparing a Group to Write a Progress Report or<br>Status Update ..... | 70        |
| A4. Preparing a Strategic Presentation on a New Product ...                | 72        |
| A5. Assessing Marketplace Trends .....                                     | 74        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| A6. Preparing for the Impact of Government Regulations<br>on a Product ..... | 76         |
| A7. Planning an Organizational Community of Practice.....                    | 78         |
| A8. Preparing the Agenda for a Meeting .....                                 | 80         |
| A9. Identifying Key Themes to Discuss at a<br>Subsequent Meeting .....       | 81         |
| A10. Establishing Priority of Topics to Be Discussed .....                   | 82         |
| A11. Planning an Event .....   | 84         |
| A12. Working on a Promotional Piece .....                                    | 86         |
| A13. Selecting a Theme for an Upcoming Conference .....                      | 88         |
| A14. Preparing a Symbol and Slogan for a Public Campaign ..                  | 90         |
| A15. Designing New Customer Service Procedures.....                          | 92         |
| A16. Preparing for Strategic Planning (Through Reflection) ..                | 94         |
| A17. Focusing a Group on a Shared Problem .....                              | 96         |
| A18. Introducing a New Training Topic.....                                   | 98         |
| A19. Assembling a Budget .....   | 99         |
| A20. Redesigning Office Space.....   | 101        |
| A21. Organizing an In-House Special Interest Group .....                     | 103        |
| <b>Section B. Decision-Making Conversations .....</b>                        | <b>105</b> |
| B1. Deciding Work Priorities.....  | 107        |
| B2. Determining Program Priorities .....                                     | 109        |
| B3. Developing Terms of Reference for a Project<br>Evaluation .....          | 111        |
| B4. Discussing a Staff Response to a Consultant Report ....                  | 113        |
| B5. Implementing a New Board Policy.....                                     | 114        |
| B6. Reworking Office Operating Guidelines.....                               | 116        |
| B7. Making Assignments Within a Team .....                                   | 118        |
| B8. Deciding on a Trade Show Strategy .....                                  | 120        |
| B9. Reframing a Team's Mission .....   | 122        |
| B10. Helping a Workmate Think Through a Decision .....                       | 124        |
| B11. Breaking up a Decisional Logjam in a Group .....                        | 126        |
| B12. Dealing with Work Environment Issues .....                              | 128        |
| B13. Identifying Gaps between a Current State<br>and a Future State .....    | 130        |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Section C. Managing and Supervising Conversations</b> . . . . .               | <b>132</b> |
| C1. Canvassing Employees . . . . .   | 134        |
| C2. Reviewing Work Descriptions . . . . .  | 135        |
| C3. Interviewing a Job Applicant . . . . .                                       | 137        |
| C4. Conducting a Performance Appraisal . . . . .                                 | 139        |
| C5. New Managers' Reflection on Their Leadership Roles . . .                     | 141        |
| C6. Musing on a Frustrating Meeting . . . . .                                    | 143        |
| C7. Reflecting on a Chaotic Meeting . . . . .                                    | 145        |
| C8. Creating Participation Guidelines . . . . .                                  | 147        |
| C9. Dealing with Delegation Issues . . . . .                                     | 149        |
| C10. Interpreting a Shop Floor Grievance . . . . .                               | 151        |
| C11. Discussing an Unexpected and Disruptive Impact . . . . .                    | 153        |
| C12. Discussing Staff Dissatisfaction . . . . .                                  | 155        |
| C13. Naming Market Influences . . . . .  | 157        |
| C14. Analyzing Sales Statistics . . . . .  | 159        |
| C15. Highlighting the Comparative Profile of the Firm . . . . .                  | 161        |
| C16. Reflecting on a Transition . . . . .  | 163        |
| C17. Assessing the Impact of a Training Experience . . . . .                     | 165        |
| C18. Building a Phased Timeline for a Restructuring Project . .                  | 167        |
| C19. Reflecting on Organizational Change . . . . .                               | 169        |
| C20. Analyzing Budget Performance . . . . .                                      | 171        |
| C21. Troubleshooting a Stalled Project . . . . .                                 | 173        |
| C22. Collaborating on a Supply Program . . . . .                                 | 175        |
| C23. Reflecting on a Proposal for Departmental Reorganization .                  | 177        |
| C24. Reflecting on a Recent Decision . . . . .                                   | 179        |
| <b>Section D. Conversations for Reviewing and Evaluating</b> . . . . .           | <b>180</b> |
| D1. Reviewing a Workshop . . . . .   | 182        |
| D2. Reviewing the Day with a Group . . . . .                                     | 183        |
| D3. Reviewing a Planning Event . . . . .   | 185        |
| D4. Reviewing the Year . . . . .   | 186        |
| D5. Reviewing an Organization's Past . . . . .                                   | 188        |
| D6. Reviewing a Consultant's Presentation . . . . .                              | 190        |
| D7: Reviewing a Major Report . . . . .   | 192        |
| D8. Understanding the Ongoing Effects of Major Event<br>on Individuals . . . . . | 194        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| D9. Discussing an Article .....   | 196        |
| D10. Evaluating a Proposal .....  | 197        |
| D11. Evaluating a Course .....  | 199        |
| D12. Evaluating a Curriculum .....  | 201        |
| D13. Evaluating the Progress of a Project, or Conducting<br>a Lessons Learned ..... | 203        |
| D14. Evaluating a Marketing Campaign .....  | 205        |
| D15. Analyzing a Product that Failed to Sell .....                                  | 207        |
| D16. Evaluating a Service Offering .....  | 209        |
| D17. Evaluating a New Software Package .....  | 211        |
| D18. Evaluating a Conference .....  | 213        |
| D19. Understanding and Applying Expert Recommendations ..                           | 215        |
| D20. Evaluating the Impact of World Events .....                                    | 217        |
| <b>Section E. Conversations for Coaching and Mentoring .....</b>                    | <b>219</b> |
| E1. Coaching a Colleague .....  | 222        |
| E2. Talking Through a Job Description .....   | 224        |
| E3. Mentoring a New Employee .....  | 226        |
| E4. Holding an Employee to Account .....  | 228        |
| E5. Discussing a Set of Employee Guidelines .....                                   | 230        |
| E6. Reflecting on Evaluations with Instructors .....                                | 232        |
| E7. Meditating on a Difficult Situation .....                                       | 234        |
| E8. Mentoring a Staff Person about a Family Crisis<br>Affecting Work #1 .....       | 235        |
| E9. Mentoring a Staff Person on a Family Crisis Affecting<br>Work #2 .....          | 237        |
| E10. Processing a Traumatic Event with an Employee .....                            | 239        |
| E11. Inspiring the Team with a Story .....  | 240        |
| E12. Debriefing a Training Video .....  | 242        |
| E13. Creating a Practice of Journaling .....  | 244        |
| E14. Reflecting on One's Life Journey .....   | 247        |
| E15. Planning for Personal Growth .....   | 249        |
| <b>Section F. Supporting Diversity and Belonging .....</b>                          | <b>251</b> |
| F1. Assessing the Diversity of the Organization .....                               | 253        |
| F2. Reviewing Policies to Strengthen Diversity, Equity,<br>and Inclusion .....      | 255        |

|                   |   |            |
|-------------------|---|------------|
| F3.               | Planning for Internationally Trained Workers . . . . .                            | 258        |
| F4.               | Determining Accommodation Needs . . . . .   | 261        |
| F5.               | Manager's Reflection on an Employee's Challenge . . . . .                         | 262        |
| F6.               | Reflecting on a Derogatory Experience . . . . .                                   | 264        |
| F7.               | Support after Derogatory Comments . . . . .                                       | 266        |
| F8.               | Becoming Aware of Microaggressions . . . . .                                      | 268        |
| F9.               | Uncovering Roots of Unconscious Bias . . . . .                                    | 270        |
| <b>Section G.</b> | <b>Resolving Conflict . . . . .</b>   | <b>271</b> |
| G1.               | Resolving a Personal Conflict . . . . .   | 272        |
| G2.               | Personal Reflection on a Conflict . . . . .                                       | 273        |
| G3.               | Responding to a Personal Complaint . . . . .                                      | 275        |
| G4.               | Calming an Upset Customer . . . . .   | 277        |
| G5.               | Initiating Dialogue to Understand a Conflict . . . . .                            | 278        |
| G6.               | Resolving a Dispute . . . . .   | 280        |
| G7.               | Solving a Team Conflict . . . . .   | 281        |
| G8.               | Resolving a Long-Term Misunderstanding . . . . .                                  | 283        |
| <b>Section H.</b> | <b>Guiding Personal and Celebrative Reflections . . . . .</b>                     | <b>285</b> |
| H1.               | Reflecting on the Day . . . . .   | 287        |
| H2.               | Learning from a Life Event . . . . .  | 288        |
| H3.               | Facilitator's Internal Reflection While Leading a Group . . . . .                 | 289        |
| H4.               | Appraising an Additional Assignment . . . . .                                     | 290        |
| H5.               | Reflecting on a Request to Take on a New Assignment . . . . .                     | 292        |
| H6.               | Celebrating a Great Victory . . . . .   | 294        |
| H7.               | Interviewing the Employee of the Month . . . . .                                  | 295        |
| H8.               | Celebrating a Colleague's Birthday . . . . .                                      | 296        |
| H9.               | Celebrating a Colleague's Retirement: A Conversation<br>with the Person . . . . . | 297        |
| H10.              | Celebrating a Colleague's Retirement: Group Reflection . . . . .                  | 299        |
| <b>Section I.</b> | <b>Connecting Work and Life . . . . .</b>   | <b>301</b> |
| I1.               | The After-School Conversation . . . . .   | 302        |
| I2.               | Reentry After a Learning Event . . . . .  | 304        |
| I3.               | Internal Reflection in a Crisis . . . . .   | 306        |
| I4.               | Resolving a Family Dispute . . . . .  | 307        |
| I5.               | Processing a Traumatic Event with Family . . . . .                                | 309        |

**Appendices**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Appendix 1. Possible Tangible Beginning Points for<br>Focused Conversations..... | 310        |
| Appendix 2. Sample Questions at Each Level .....                                 | 313        |
| Appendix 3. The Flow of a Focused Conversation .....                             | 320        |
| Appendix 4. Guide for Preparing a Conversation .....                             | 321        |
| Appendix 5. Focused Conversation Preparation Worksheet ...                       | 322        |
| Appendix 6. Example: A Conversation Plan Using<br>the Worksheet.....             | 323        |
| Appendix 7. Example: A Conversation with Typical Answers ..                      | 325        |
| Appendix 8. Informal Conversations .....   | 329        |
| Appendix 9. Using the Focused Conversation Method<br>with Other ToP Methods..... | 330        |
| Appendix 10. Introduction to Image Change .....                                  | 333        |
| Appendix 11. Other Methods That Follow the<br>ORID Process.....                  | 334        |
| <b>Bibliography.....</b>   | <b>335</b> |
| <b>Index .....</b>   | <b>339</b> |
| <b>About ICA .....</b>   | <b>349</b> |
| <b>About the Authors.....</b>  | <b>353</b> |
| <b>About New Society Publishers.....</b>   | <b>354</b> |