



ACE - it!*

A source for fresh ideas...

Shared by Michael Keller and Jean Singer

www.ecologyofdesigninhumansystems.com

You can use **ACE-it!** * to get help from your peers or colleagues about any conundrum. Just take a few minutes to think about your situation and what questions you have. Then find a group of people you respect who are willing to give you 45 minutes to an hour of their time. You can do it over the phone or in person. Ask one person to be the *Time-Keeper*, one to be the *Facilitator*. While this process stimulates much conversation, it is important to *stick to the guidelines and time frames*. Also, sometimes the process reveals that the original ‘burning question’ was not really ‘the most important’ question after all. It is possible to do multiple ACE-it! sessions, each deepening on the previous engagement. **NOTE:** Two time allotments are provided in this version: 45 & 60-minutes (in brackets). Sessions may be audio and/or video recorded for reference afterwards or to share with people not present for the session.

NOTE: Based on the work of [Ronald Lippitt](#)

5 minutes (5 mins)	YOU = presenter... Summary of YOUR Situation/ Problem/Opportunity/ Project and the “burning question” you have...	YOU briefly summarize: ✓ The <i>situation</i> that you want to address ✓ Your <i>intention</i> : what do you want to create? ✓ Your <i>edge</i> : what don’t you know and need to discover? ✓ What is your <i>burning question</i> ?
5 minutes (5 mins)	Clarification questions	Your peers ask YOU questions to better understand the situation. YOU answer them. <i>This is not the time for brainstorming or advice or discussion or solving-the-problem – simply Q & A.</i>
1-2 minutes (3-5 mins)	Stillness and mirroring; quiet reflection	Each peer takes time to reflect on what images and feelings come up and what questions are evoked. This will likely enrich the quality of contributions during the peer dialogue.
12 minutes (15 mins)	Peers deepen the dialogue, sharing as if the question holder is not there; YOU take notes	YOU listen actively, no speaking – however hard that may be...take notes for later reference
5 minute (5 mins)	YOU delve deeper	YOU probe, ask for more, ask additional questions, or give more information based on what you heard
12 minutes (15 mins)	Second round: Peers have further dialogue, YOU take notes	Again, YOU listen actively, no speaking – however hard that may be...take notes for later reference ...This can be a generative, creative space.
5 minutes (10 mins) Total: 45 mins (= 60 mins)	Learning – what did you discover from this process?	YOU go first – share insights, ideas to go forward; peers follow...

* **ACE-it!** = **A**nalyze, **C**reate, **E**xplore

ACE-it!*- Best Practices

What this process is good for...

- To "explore" a challenging and perplexing situation
- To give you a "fresh perspective" and some innovative ideas
- To help you expand what you are aware of "inside and outside"
- To tap into the support that is available to you in a quick, easy, and creative way

When this works well...is a good fit:

- When the inquiry and engagement has revealed "what really matters": folks are ready to drill-down
- When there is genuine interest on the part of the participants AND ample time to use this for wide "exploration" of an issue or topic
 - When you are seeing patterns reoccurring and when you are stuck in your attempts to shift
 - When you are developing something and you need quick and stimulating input
- When using an ideal size (5-7 persons) AND there is a "trained-in-the-Ace-it" or experienced facilitator for each group
- When the space is large enough to accommodate the number of participants (in a way such that their conversations do not distract each other)...OR have break-out rooms available...

When this may not work so well...is a questionable fit:

- When an immediate decision is actually necessary
- When, holding multiple, simultaneous ACE-its, there are insufficient number of facilitators for the preferred group size of 5-7 persons
- When the space is not large enough to allow groups not to be overheard or distracted
- When some individuals might have "unresolved" personal issues.

SET-UP FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROCESS:

Prep on part of the presenter in the process:

- The "power" of the question is critical -- needs to be "juicy", meaningful and emotionally relevant in "your" real world.
- Capture the "essence" of the issues facing you AND be very specific about the "input" you want from the group:
 - What is the one situation that is important to you where you face a significant challenge(s)?
 - Describe exactly what you find challenging.
 - Specifically, what is the ONE question that you would like help with?
 - What are the "key elements" of your situation that your colleagues need to know?
- As the Presenter and you are listening, you might realize that your question has shifted to a more relevant one. Feel free to state that...OR...consider holding a second ACE-it with that new question.

Prep on the part of the Process Facilitator:

- Stick to the timing and instructions on the process sheet...remind accordingly. It works!!
- Resist the temptation to control or manage the conversation: let things emerge, unfold naturally
- Invite everyone to share their thoughts – AND to listen deeply
- Invite people to speak to each other and NOT to the presenter directly -- pretend that the presenter is not there.

Selecting appropriate participants:

- People who have a stake or interest in the issue AND who are curious and open to exploring
- Use caution in including "experts" ...guard against preconceived, fixed perspectives.
- Encourage representation of differing viewpoints; diversity often surprises.

Shared by Michael Keller, Jean Singer, Ecology of Design in Human Systems

* ACE-it! = Analyze, Create, Explore

www.ecologyofdesigninhumansystems.com