



## **BIRTH CAFÉ**

WHILST SOME OF US MAY BIRTH, ALL OF US ARE BORN.

The aim of Birth Café is to foster and support conversations about birth in order to build understanding and respect for its psychosocial, cultural and bodily significance for everyone.

Birth increasingly takes centre stage, through popular TV programmes, celebrity pregnancies and NHS maternity scandals. However, in a Westernised medical system, what should be a momentous experience for the person giving birth, the baby being born, partners and the wider family, can often seem reduced to a procedure or 'event' devoid of its wider significance.

Birth Café takes its lead from the Death Café movement, helping to provide a safe, non-judgmental space in which anyone and everyone is welcome to come and discuss their relationship to, and concept of birth.

A Birth Café can either be for a general public or for particular constituencies such as people who can or have birthed, Trans parents, adoptive parents etc. however, should always be welcoming, inclusive and diverse.

Birth Café can take place virtually with break out groups or as one small group of up to 12.

### **STEP BY STEP GUIDE**

1. Timings – 1.5 - 2 hrs in total – 15/20 minutes settling in & introduction, followed by 60 - 90 minute group discussion.
2. Space - a safe, accessible & private space such as a backroom in a café, pub or a room in an academic, cultural, healthcare or community space, where there will be no disturbance or thoroughfare during the course of the event. Participants sit in a circle round small tables.
3. Refreshments – provide or at nominal cost - tea/coffee/water and cakes/biscuits which are available at the start of the event and throughout.
4. Participants – up to 40, split into groups of 6 to 8. A Birth Café is an open and 'relaxed event' therefore anyone who may want to take part, is

welcome, irrespective of age, cultural background, sexuality, gender or life experience. Babies and children are welcome, as are those who are neuro-diverse and have a physical or intellectual disability.

5. Facilitation – A Birth Café is led by an experienced group leader, who has connection to birth i.e doula, midwife, antenatal teacher, academic/artist/curator/producer/community leader involved with ‘mother art’, research into birth or maternal experience or other activities such as ‘mother & baby groups’. Other facilitators are recommended ideally with one per sub-group.
6. Introduction (max.15 - 20 mins) – The main facilitator welcomes all participants & introduces themselves and their connection to birth. They introduce the Birth Café – Concept, Safeguarding & Confidentiality, Community. Refreshments are offered.
7. Discussion (60 - 90 mins) – each participant, in turn, introduces themselves and why they are here (max. 3 mins each) – this is followed by open discussion, facilitated by the group facilitators or self-directed in small groups if no other facilitators are available. If the conversation does not flow, then the facilitator is encouraged to have a few questions to pose in the group to help structure the discussion (see example questions below).
8. A bell will be rung every 15 minutes and participants are invited to change group if they want.
9. The main facilitator will bring the Birth Café to an end and thank everyone for taking part.
10. The Birth Café logo and a signature image are available to download on the website. Promotion of your event can be through social media or putting up leaflets/posters in community spaces. Please use the hashtag #BirthCafe

## **SAFEGUARDING & CONFIDENTIALITY**

We recommend any facilitator have an advanced DBS and Professional Indemnity Insurance. These will be in place if the person is a health care professional and running a group, however anyone independent of this should consider putting this in place. birth café is not liable for any adverse outcome due to the participation in a café. All contributions in the Birth Café space should be treated with confidentiality, unless it is considered that someone is acting in a way that endangers themselves or others.

## **COMMUNITY- INCLUSION AND EQUITY**

Birth Cafe is an inclusive space - we welcome all people that want to talk about birth and we positively encourage inclusion and diversity of experience.

We promote the creation of ‘safe spaces’ so people can share and explore experiences of birth and parenting with a non-judgemental and open attitude.

A Birth Café is an open and ‘relaxed event’ therefore anyone who may want to take part, is welcome, irrespective of age, cultural background, sexuality, gender or life experience. Babies and children are welcome, as are those who are neuro-diverse and have a physical or intellectual disability.

Facilitators are encouraged to moderate the discussion and ensure that all participants are able to speak, and have equal time and attention. We encourage all participants and facilitators to recognise individual experiences and intersectional differences due to race, class, sex, gender, socioeconomic status and disability.

Participants should take it in turns to speak, not interrupt or speak over people and respect other people's views and thoughts. We completely reject and will not tolerate any form of abuse, discrimination, bullying or insensitivity to others. Anyone not respecting the conditions of the Birth Café will be asked to leave. Facilitators are encouraged to share their own experiences too so that there is equality in the group, and a non-hierarchical structure.

## **NOT-FOR-PROFIT**

A Birth Café should be non-commercial and not generate any profit for the organisers – minimal financial contributions from participants should only be charged for costs directly associated with the running of the event. These costs may include hire of a space, promotion, refreshments and the workshop facilitator's time (identified by guidelines such as recommended fees from a professional body).

## **SAMPLE PROMPT QUESTIONS**

If the conversation drags or dries up, try using these open questions.

- What are your experiences of birth?
- What does birth mean to you?
- How do you think birth is represented in the media?
- What do you know about your own birth and do you think it's significant?

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