

*“Oh, the power of the creative and energized few taking on a vision for what the world could hold for us ... I truly feel hopeful! We touched on the unseen powers of change.*

—a Louisville facilitator

## Visioning into the Future in One Session<sup>1</sup>

### RATIONALE

This visioning exercise is suggested for Circles that need to accomplish the core of their visioning in one session.

### OUTCOMES

Circle participants will:

- experience through visioning what our future could look like.
- clarify what can be done in the present (and near future) to manifest the future we desire.

**TIME NEEDED:** 2+ hours

### MATERIALS

- art materials and journaling tools (for people to capture their visions)
- flip chart paper and markers

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

1. Set the context for collective visioning with the group. Imagining what is possible for our future can be powerful—we cannot create what we cannot imagine. Encourage participants to hold their questions and ask them to trust you as you lead them through an experience that can be discussed afterward if needed.

2. Ask participants to write down their age and today’s date, and then to add 25 years to both. Ask them to write down the names and ages of the children closest to them. Finally give them a moment to write down a few of the values most important to them and/or two or three of their desires for society/the world. Ask them to do this rather quickly, letting them know that the exercise will bring them into a deeper exploration of each.

#### Stepping into the Future

3. Lead participants through a simple guided meditation. Invite them to be comfortable, to close their eyes, and to take a few deep breaths. As you talk people through the guided vision, use your voice to develop a rhythm, pausing between sentences. Especially pause after questions and instructions. Here is a sample script for you to use:

*Feel your self being carried into the future. One year. Three years. Five years. Ten years from now. Twenty years from now. You are being carried 25 years into the future.*

*It is the year (add 25 to the current year).*

*In this year, imagine that society is built around the values you hold dear, that your desires for society are met.*

*Imagine that you wake up in that future.*

*What do you see?*



Collective  
Visioning

<sup>1</sup> Based on an exercise by Linda Stout in *Bridging the Class Divide and Other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1996).

What are you doing?  
 What are the children in your life doing?  
 What kind of dwelling do you live in?  
 Who do you live with?  
 You go outside, what do you see?  
 What is growing from the earth?  
 You go out into your neighborhood, who do you see?  
 What are they doing?  
 What kinds of dwellings and buildings are there on the street?  
 You leave your neighborhood and go into the wider community. How do you travel?  
 As you are moving around in the wider community, what kinds of institutions do you see?  
 What institutions and groups seem to be most important in the community?  
 You meet up with one of the children from your list who is now grown.  
 What is this now adult child doing?  
 You talk and realize that you want to find out about what is happening in the community  
 and the worlds beyond. How do you get this news?  
 What is the news about?  
 Where else do you go?  
 What do you see?  
 Who do you talk to?  
 What do you learn?  
 It is time to return.  
 Once you've returned, and when you are ready, you may open your eyes.

4. Allow the group to sit in silence during the transition.

### **Making the Vision Concrete**

5. Instruct participants, when they are ready, to take about 15 minutes, using whatever art supplies and journaling tools are available, to capture in a picture, in a symbol, or in words the future that they saw. Remind them that this step in the process is not about creating great art, but about finding ways to capture their visions so we can talk about them.

### **Sharing the Visions**

6. Ask participants to find a partner. They will have two tasks for their sharing: 1.) Talk for a couple of minutes about their vision picture, symbol, or words; and 2.) Give an example or two of how something in their present life that inspires them to have this vision and/or believe it is possible.
7. As everyone finishes sharing their visions, hang them up around the room.

### **Brainstorming the Future**

8. Invite participants to share all their ideas (without questioning or judgment at this point) about how the future is different from today. Remind them to focus on the positive realization of their visions. Capture what they say on flip chart paper—as a list or as a map, clustering ideas that are similar to one another.

### **Brainstorming the Seeds of Hope**

9. Invite participants to share all their ideas (without questioning or judgment) about what is happening in our society today that will help make our visions of society a reality. You can capture these on the same flip chart paper, using a marker of another color.



## Individual Reflection

**10.** Provide about ten minutes for participants to reflect individually. They can use the art materials and journaling tools to think about the following:

What is needed to make these visions a reality?

How am I already working to make these visions a reality?

What do I want to be doing tomorrow to make the visions a reality? Next year? In five years? Ten years? Twenty years?

What help do I need to do this work?

## Vision Circle

**11.** End by bringing everyone back together in the Circle, inviting participants to share, and making sure everyone who wants to share, has a chance to. (For many groups, this conversation can go on for quite a while, so being aware of time at this point is important.) You may want to focus their sharing with guidelines like these:

Share what you believe and feel is most important to making these visions a reality.

Share one gift that you bring to making these visions a reality.

Share what you will be doing tomorrow to make the vision a reality.

If needed, make any requests for help. (Know that your request will not be answered right away in the Circle—all will listen in silence—but replies may come to you from folks later on.)

## NOTES FOR FACILITATORS

Not every facilitator feels comfortable or confident leading guided visioning exercises. One of the Curriculum Committee members noted her own reluctance to lead visioning and discovered that she could learn by watching others and even made it a part of the Curriculum Committee's process—envisioning this facilitators' guide.

## V A R I A T I O N S

Not all groups are comfortable with visioning, as we noted earlier in this section. One variation on the theme is to vision one, three, five or ten years into the future, instead of 25 years into the future. For some people, looking beyond ten years is too daunting to consider, given the current state of the planet.

Several Circles created murals after this visioning exercise and really loved the experience.

In one of the Circles in San Francisco: *"We experienced some hopelessness and fear that our vision wasn't possible. So we created a mural of all the 'seeds' that are currently growing in our world that will help to make our vision possible. For example, we named programs, individuals, groups, movements, and institutions that we believe are creating the change we want to see in the world. It was incredible all the ideas we had, and we all learned a lot about different projects that are happening. It gave us a lot of hope!"*

In the Berkeley Circle: *"We wanted to remember our vision for the world in 20 years so we created a mural with images from magazines that would remind us of our dreams. Everyone started creating their own part of the mural and then we started to connect all the areas with the parts of our visions that were clearly shared by the whole collective."*