



The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker

Think you might want to read this book?

Did you know the greatest potential for memorable moments at an event happens at the beginning, end, and a peak moment in between? In *The Art of Gathering*, Priya Parker unpacks each component of a gathering from invitation to intentional ending with the perfect combination of research and anecdotes. This is a great read about a topic that receives far too little attention when we consider how often we gather... and how often it underwhelms!

What would Socrates ask?

- What is the purpose of Parents' Night?
- What is the purpose of Open House?
- What is the purpose of Parent/Teacher Conferences?
- What is the right frequency for gathering together as a whole school?
- What if every meeting with parents was titled with "Partnership" and the stated outcome was to support the child?
- What if all meetings had a purpose statement or explicit desired outcomes?
- What if faculty meetings rotated locations depending on purpose?
- What if we chose student learning locations based on function and density (students per square foot)?
- What if every meeting began with a two minute share out from each person?
- What if school administrative meetings were called SIS meetings: Share Out / Inform / Solve?

Research

- Studies show that audiences disproportionately remember the first 5 percent, the last 5 percent, and a climactic moment of a talk.
- A 2001 Johns Hopkins study found that when members of a medical team introduced themselves and shared concerns ahead of time, the likelihood of complications and deaths fell by 35 percent.

Concepts

- "Tightness of fit"- when an organizer does something to increase cohesion (e.g., naming a group with multiple adjectives)
- "Ichi-go ichi-e"- Japanese for "one meeting, one moment in your life that will never happen again"
- All meetings should be organized around a desired outcome...or else the meaning will get diluted with process
- "Table moment"- when a group gets so large that they no longer fit around

- “Chateau Principle”- people are affected by their environment, and you should host your gathering in a place and context that serves your purpose
- “Law of two feet”- if you are some place and not learning, you should use your two feet to get yourself in a new situation
- “Crucible moments”- challenging moments in our lives that shape us in some deep way and shift our lens of the world

Quotes from the author

- In democracies, the freedom to assemble is one of the foundational rights granted to every individual. In countries descending into authoritarianism, one of the first things to go is the right to assemble.
- So widespread is this desire not to impose that a growing number of people report not wanting any funeral at all when they die.
- It was almost becoming a routine- that great enemy of meaningful gathering.
- Having a purpose simply means knowing why you’re gathering and doing your participants the honor of being convened for a reason. And once you have that purpose in mind, you will suddenly find it easier to make all the decisions that a gathering requires.
- You will have begun to gather with purpose when you learn to exclude with purpose. When you learn to close doors.
- ... here is what the skilled gatherer must know: in trying not to offend, you fail to protect the gathering itself and the people in it.
- If you want a lively but inclusive conversation as a core part of your gathering, eight to twelve people is the number you should consider.
- Venues come with scripts. We tend to follow rigid if unwritten scripts that we associate with specific locations. We tend to behave formally in courtrooms, boardrooms, and palaces. We bring out different sides of ourselves at the beach, the park, and the nightclub.
- 90% of what makes a gathering successful was put in place beforehand.
- Asking guests to contribute to a gathering ahead of time changes their perception of it.
- Priming matters because gathering is a social contract, and it is in the pregame window that this contract is drafted and implicitly agreed on.
- Another tactic that helps to undam realness in gatherings is a push for people’s experiences over their ideas.
- The skilled gatherer knows not only how to make people share and connect, but also how to make things fruitfully controversial.
- You may have grown up, as I did, hearing the adage to avoid talk of sex, politics, and religion at your gatherings... Personally, I believe that few things are as responsible for the mediocrity and dullness of so many gatherings as this epically bad advice.
- In my experience, though, good controversy rarely happens on its own. It needs to be designed for and given structure.
- ... great hosts, like great actors, understand that how you end things, like how you begin them, shapes people’s experience, sense of meaning, and memory.

- Accepting the impermanence of a gathering is part of the art. When we vaguely try to extend our gatherings, we are not only living in denial, we are also depriving our gathering of the kind of closing that gives it the chance of enduring in people’s hearts.
- Many, though not all, gatherings will benefit from a pause to reflect on what happened here.

Quotes from others

- “As traditional religion struggles to attract young people, millennials are looking elsewhere with increasing urgency.” - Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile

Organizations/schools working on answers

- [Meetup](#)
- [Meeteor](#)
- [Opportunity Collaboration Conference](#)
- [Do Something](#)

Gateways to further learning

- [The State of Enterprise Work](#)

Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education

Author(s) Last Name	Title
George	<i>True North</i>
Post	<i>Etiquette</i>

The applicability of this book to education is



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