

## **Conversations That Make a Difference**

**by Barbara Berry, Ph.D.**

**What is meaningful in our work? What matters? What do we need to understand in order to make our work successful? Who needs to be involved?**

**Today, conversation is a means of bringing people together to address the issues we face in these disconnected times. In this rapidly changing world we often feel separate and alone, overwhelmed. We can find a better way through good conversation that open the door to understanding diverse points of view which otherwise leave us separated, at odds with our world and our colleagues.**

**By communicating together in open-minded conversations, we discover the collective wisdom is already within us as an inter-dependent community. The wisdom of the system in which we work can not be found in any one of us alone. We can only find it by talking together to uncover what is meaningful, what matters in our organization.**

**More than ever people are polarized, uncertain and overwhelmed. In a time of extreme electronic connectivity where the internet and cell phones offer connections around the world, it seems a paradox that people often find themselves disconnected, untrusting and uncertain of what we know.**

**Information and media noise are blasted at an unprecedented rate, making it more and more challenging to sort out relevance and truth, to find what matters in all the “noise.” The complexity in our lives has no simple solutions, but by talking together with an intention to collaborate and talk through to shared understanding we begin to find ways to create a future we all desire.**

***Margaret Wheatley says it best: “For me, the moments when collective wisdom appears are always breathtaking. Even though I know such wisdom is bound to appear, I’m always stunned with delight when it enters... and the appearance of such wisdom is a huge relief, we actually do know how to solve our problems! ...all the time the wisdom has been waiting for us, waiting for us to enter meaningful conversations and deeper connections, waiting for us to realize we can be wise together.”***

**For this wisdom to emerge we must engage in conversations that matter. We must be able to trust that our ideas are significant and speak our thoughts, but we must strive to see into the thinking of others. Reflect on our own thinking, question it as we surface our assumptions and set them aside for the moment. Set aside polite conversations and speak openly and meaningfully to help others see into your thinking. Look into others thinking by asking inquiring questions that surface the depth of their ideas.**

**Collectively we find ways to go forward, prosper and engage in meaningful work at which we feel matters and brings joy and pride in our work.**