



L'Arche USA

Member Development

Toolbox

Guide



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L'Arche USA Member Development Tool Box

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Purpose of Tool Box



Welcome to your L'Arche Member Development / Learning Tool Box!

As L'Arche USA grows its understanding of how to provide more inviting, diverse and inclusive learning and reflection opportunities for all members, we are clear that these opportunities are enhanced by inviting people into multiple means of engaging. We have begun to use particular inclusive, visual and creative materials in national engagements. As we build our national member development curriculum, we will be offering learning activities and formation sessions that can be used in local communities – and that make use of some of these same tools.

In addition, the Charter Process launching in the summer of 2019 is intentional to offer ways for all members to engage and give feedback from their lived experience of community, membership and L'Arche. That process is making use of these same tools and introducing some new tools and exercises that will help us all to bring our hearts, minds, bodies and spirits to the Charter engagement. An intended fruit of that process is to grow our collective learning around more inclusive engagement.

For these reasons, we are gifting each community a Tool Box for Member Development – a box of learning aids and gizmos that we hope will entice and engage a broad range of members. We will offer some context and suggestions for using these tools, but we also highly encourage your own exploration and adaptation.

Happy Learning!



Tool Box Contents

Photo Language

120 pictures from 2019 Charter Resources



Word Suitcase Cards

66 cards from 2019 Charter Resources



Object Starter Collection

20+ Objects



Art Supply Starter

Crayons, water color, pastels, mixed media paper



Pictograms

120 cards from 2019 Charter Resources



and more to add!!

More **Objects** to consider adding to the collection:

- Hat, tie, other clothing
- Spoon, plate, cup or other objects from daily living
- Spiritual symbols (candle, cross, prayer beads, dove, etc.) – we encourage diverse symbols
- Items from your home/community that have particular meaning or resonance
- You can also always invite people to find an object beyond the collection in your meeting space

More **Art Supplies!**

- We provided a start. Please add as you see fit in general or for a particular exercise: More paper, markers, magazines & glue, other paint, beads, clay...

More **Words** for the suitcase

- There are index cards in the Word Suitcase pouch to encourage you to add words that you don't find among the words provided – one word per card. Grow the set to suit you.

Tools to express choice:

- Stickers, dots & post-its can be used as non-verbal ways to vote or express preference/opinion.

Microphone! In our work to amplify a diversity of voices, we have found that the presence and use of a microphone helps people to speak up and out. It can help someone speak for themselves without needing to be repeated. When you use it, encourage all members to use it so it equalizes voices rather than singling some out. We usually can all use the boost and the chance to know we have the floor!

- Portable Voice Amplifier with Wireless Mic for around \$150 – see Sharon for tested suggestion

Invitation

We are offering some ways to use these tools – and we encourage you to find your own ways. We invite you to adapt and explore. We would love to hear what you do that works well and offer that learning to others. Sharon Ryan (Director of Member Development & Learning) and the Managers of Community Support and Learning (MCSLs) are happy to talk further with you about the tools and learning methodology. We are all trying new things and learning from them – and we would benefit from engaging with you.



This guide shares a bit about each tool's purpose and some possible uses.

We will also share an overview of the learning methodology being implemented by L'Arche USA. This is in the early stages of use and we are developing accompanying learning aides, including this tool box, to help us plan, engage and evaluate our learning more cohesively and effectively.

We have provided additional tools that you may find helpful when reflecting together:

- Circle of Trust Touchstones (safe and trustworthy conversation)
- Guide for Spiritual Conversation (adapted from L'Arche International)

Tools: Purpose and Uses

- **Photo Language**

Approaching a subject from a different perspective can help all learners gain insight from one another. The selection of photos provided is intended to be an opening into a way to consider questions from a different point of view. Feel free to add photos from your community. You don't always have to use all the photos; it's suggested to have a selection displayed that is three times the number of participants. Participants may select an image that resonates with their thoughts and then express the feelings that the image evokes to tie together their mind and hearts.



Use of photo language can be a helpful place to start for learners who think by way of association instead of linear logic or priority – to pick a photo that they associate with a question. Learners who approach thinking in a more linear fashion may use images to translate their sharing with a more visual learner. Both scenarios help embody learning and offer images into the learning context in helpful ways.

- **Object Starter Collection**

Like photo language, objects can evoke meaning, energy or story for us and can help us approach questions from a place of creativity. You can invite learners to peruse and select an object that strikes a connection for them to the theme or question for sharing. The objects offered may have multiple meanings with unique prompts. Some have symbolic meaning



and some can lead a learner to think of a topic in a new way. The objects can be used to express emotions, feelings, ideas or stories. They also help learners who benefit from tactile engagement. Objects from the collection and from your closets, handbags, workshops, desktops, dressers, cupboards can also be used like props to create a mime, tableau or a photo. They can help people tell and embody real and envisioned stories.

- **Pictograms**

A pictogram can help express a situation or concept more concretely than the imagery of photo language. You can add or change any pictogram to adapt the tool to your community. You can also make your own pictograms. These pictograms don't belong to an existing visual vocabulary so you are free to interpret even if you are not trained. You can combine them to outline a story or process. They are especially useful when you need to translate the notes of your conversations into easy read documents, because they visually describe situations for anyone to understand.



- **Word Suitcase Cards**

If we consider that a word is like a suitcase, what does the suitcase contain? What experiences does this word bring to mind? Often the words we use in L'Arche don't have the same meaning for everyone. This selection of words was created using important L'Arche documents, feel free to use index cards to add more words for your community (one word per card). The purpose of the word suitcase is to help learners to unpack a word for themselves and to create a shared understanding for some key words when used in your community.



One way to accomplish this: The facilitator chooses cards and distributes 1 or 2 cards to small groups. Each person then reflects on their own about the meaning of this word is her/his life. Which experiences taught him/her the meaning of the word? After this time of reflection, each person shares with the whole group. Notice the difference in understanding of the words, often the understanding is very different because of age, culture, gender, or different experiences. Being aware of these differences helps us to better understand each other.

You can also consider which words are most important to each person individually, noticing which ones are named frequently, and which cards are not named. Discussion of usage may bring the group to new insights and focus for learning.

- **Art Supply Starter**

Creative work can help us express ourselves. Whether it is through image, color or texture – art sometimes helps a learner to connect with the energy, ideas or emotion they have on a topic. The kinesthetic act of making also engages some learners more easily than seeing or hearing will. Use of these tools is not limited to those persons who are considered “good artists.” Every learner has the capacity to gain insight from putting a brush or marker in their hand and allowing their creativity to flow onto a blank piece of paper.



- **Ways to use these tools**

- **Introduce:** You can put one of the collections out on a table and ask people to pick (or make) something that will tell the group something new about them.
- **Check-in:** Similar to introducing, put out a collection and ask people to pick (or make) something that will help share how they are today, how they come to the gathering.
- **Topical Reflection:** To respond to a reflective question on a particular topic
 - Put out a collection and pose a question. Invite people to select or make something that connects to the question. You can encourage them to look for something that reminds them of their own experience or connection.
 - For a more verbal group, we have seen objects used in a “blind draw” where people pick an object or photo without looking – then see what the object/photo sparks – an idea, story, feeling – related to the question/topic.
- **Sharing and/or talking:** It can be enough for some to share visually what they chose or made with few or no words; others may want to add more words of explanation.
- **For Charter purposes:** Some tools will also have specific ways of helping your group to engage the Charter process reflection. See Charter Guide for fuller prompts/directions.
- **What else?** You will think of other uses. Feel free to share back to us when a new idea goes well!

Thank you for engaging with these tools. If you have questions, needs or suggestions, please reach out to Sharon Ryan, Director of Member Development and Learning at sharon@larcheusa.org.