Sample Cosmic Café Schedule

So what does a café look like? Most are an hour or less. And with so much to fit in, the time flies. The schedule below offers a snapshot of a “typical” café. Adapt it to fit the specifics of your café.

5:00 pm  Arrive early for set-up
- Set up the AV and do a dry run (sound, video, microphone, etc.).
- Arrange tables and chairs for the anticipated number of café attendees.
- Set out coasters, giveaways, evaluation forms, flyers, photo-release forms, etc.
- Check with venue about food and drink specials.
- Review with the speaker how to moderate the discussion. (Raised hands or questions on cards? Moderator or speaker selects next audience member to speak? Use a microphone?)

6:00 pm  Kick off the cafe
- Encourage people to answer the coaster questions and use the QR codes to find the answers.
- Circulate a sign-in sheet to collect names and email addresses.

6:12 pm  Welcome the audience
- Encourage the audience to support the venue by ordering food and drinks.
- Explain briefly that the café format emphasizes open discussion and audience involvement.

6:15 pm  Show The Fabric of the Cosmos video clip(s)
- Provide a brief introduction, if necessary.
- Play the video clip(s) you selected.

6:20 pm  Begin presentation
- Introduce the speaker with some fun personal information.
- Pose open-ended questions to prep the audience for the discussion.
- Turn it over to the speaker. (The presentation should be a conversation starter, not a comprehensive overview. Remember: no podium, no PowerPoint, no technical jargon!)

6:30 pm  Have a group discussion/conversation
- Use the moderator to keep the conversation moving so it’s lively, clear, and inclusive.
- End the discussion with a simple “Thank you.” when it seems that people are losing interest.

6:50 pm  Wrap up
- Thank people for turning out and the speaker for sharing his/her work.
- Tell the audience some ways to continue their exploration of the topic. (See Wrap-up Points.)
- Distribute the surveys/questionnaires and pencils.
- Circulate the sign-in sheet and remind people to add their names.

7:00 pm  Schmooze
- Some cafés take a 5–10 minute break and reconvene for a second round of group conversation.
- Some of the most interesting conversations happen after the main discussion is over, so be prepared to linger.
- Mingle with the group so people can talk one-on-one with you and the speaker.