



FACT! – Food Action!

# Manual for Food Action Coaches

A guide to helping others join  
and benefit from the *Food Action* program.

- \* Food is part of our cultural heritage
- \* The food chain is the biggest polluter on the planet
- \* We've drastically changed our food habits over the past half century  
We can do it again.



**Find** the [Food Action web site](#)  
**Consult** the [FACT! online reference library](#)  
**Check** the [EU Projects Website](#)

**Content** of the Food Action program was devised by GAP International and curated in cooperation with project partners in Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Spain.

With the help of the Food Action coaches – you! – we offer guidance for a Food Action journey: helping people to take small steps, to link with others for mutual support, and to locate those who can offer professional expertise.

*Disclaimers:* We have consulted many leading sources to make Food Action easy; but we are neither environmental specialists nor health practitioners. We are unable to offer any specific health advice, nor do we endorse any specific products.

*This publication has been produced as part of the Food Action participatory learning and training package for food-wise households, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the funding agency.*

## Welcome to the next level of the Food Action program!

No doubt you've already completed, or at least started, the Food Action program. If not, your first action is to [register, here.](#)



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## 1. About food

### What we are talking about

Our main message to participants in Food Action:

*A not-too-big change in eating habits is*

- \* *The biggest single contribution you can make to your family's health.*
- \* *The biggest single contribution you can make to the health of the planet.*
- \* *A way to save money and support your local community.*
- \* *And: it's easy!*



## Approach

### An empowering aid to experiment with eating habits

Each participant is

- \* Invited to take experimental action
- \* Encouraged to do research and make conscious choices
- \* Supported to build new, long-lasting habits

### A proven methodology

- \* Developed and documented over more than two decades
- \* in 20+ countries
- \* It works!

## Food Action - FAct! - Topics

The Food Action program addresses three major food topics:

- \* Food waste
- \* Food, climate and environment
- \* Food and health

The fourth topic, Ripples on the Water, helps reinforce the new habits.



## 2. This is Food Action!

### Why behaviour change?

#### 1. To influence big systems

A vital key to changing a big system like the food regime, whether local or global, is to change the consumer's demands and priorities. When enough people demand organic food, organic food enters the market. When enough people refuse to buy products based on slave labour, producers take a closer look at their suppliers.

Experience tells us that consumer demands and priorities are not easily changed by information, lecturing, or preaching; they are more often changed through action: programs that offer new experiences and perspectives. More in Section 6.

- \* Food is part of our cultural heritage
- \* The food chain is the biggest polluter on the planet
- \* We've already changed – we can do it again

#### 2. Personal action is needed

The problems associated with food can't be solved by technology or politics alone: personal action is needed. Some of the actions may be 'one-off', like better arrangements for storing food at home. Still, the biggest impact comes from changes we make to our everyday habits. The main focus of FAct! is on long-term behaviour change: forming and reinforcing more sustainable food habits.

#### Program design

##### A set of online lessons

There are four on-line 'lessons', each reinforced by an explanatory booklet:

- \* Introduction. How to waste less food
- \* Learning to eat with care for the environment
- \* Adopting healthier eating habits
- \* Celebrating achievements, doing and planning new actions

Each lesson revolves around a quiz to trigger ideas about the potential for change. The accompanying booklet gives 'how-to' information: recipes for action, and indeed also food recipes.

The quiz questions are repeated so participants can see their progress.

#### How it looks to the participant

Any person or household can enroll for the program. Then they

- \* Take the first quiz, read the first booklet
- \* Experiment with ways to reduce food waste, for a week or as long as they wish
- \* Take the 2nd quiz, read the 2nd booklet
- \* Experiment with ways to eat more sustainably
- \* Take the 3rd quiz, read the 3rd booklet
- \* Experiment with ways to eat more healthily
- \* Take the 4th quiz, read the 4th booklet
- \* Plan and test new actions
- \* Take the final quiz, receive a diploma

## What it means to be a coach

### Why coach?

If you are interested in food and sustainable lifestyles, the Food Action program offers you an easy opportunity to enroll and support many people to introduce changes in their daily habits. You will play a key role as an AMBASSADOR in an international program that uses proven methods to bring about long-term behaviour change – for the benefit of the participants as well as the planet.

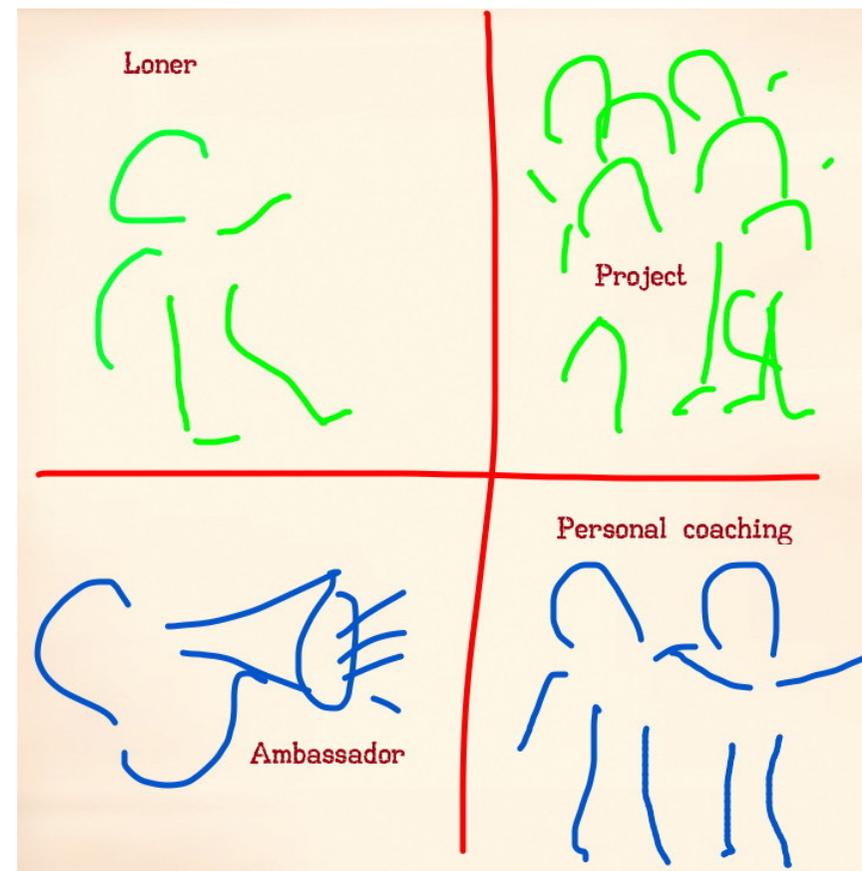
If you decide to engage in PERSONAL COACHING, you will also learn and practice skills that are useful in many situations, from home to leisure activities to work; skills that many employers are now seeking.

### Are you a loner, or part of a project?

You can have arrived at this point, wishing to become a Food Action coach, through two different routes: as an engaged individual, or as part of a local or national project. In either case the main skills and processes are the same; but for a lone individual there are extra things to think about, as described in Sections 3 and 5.

If you are part of a local or national project, you will be linked to a 'host organization'. It could be an NGO, a local authority, a business sponsor/partner... As a project **ambassador** you will be making contacts, informing potential partners and participants, enrolling participants.

You may also choose to take on a more typical coach role, supporting individual participants or helping to form and support teams of participants.



### 3. The ambassador

#### Using networks

##### The loner

An analysis of stakeholders in your community will quickly show you where your personal networks are strong, and point to areas where you might look for partners. See the checklist in Annexe 1. All those listed could help you reach many people, or sponsor an event, or support your 'ambassadorial' work in other ways.

The important thing for a loner is to find one or more stakeholder groups where you have a good personal connection. A good start is to invite them to help you take one step, for instance, hosting an information meeting.

You may want to do this work mostly on-line, for instance if you have large social media networks; or you may want to organize one or more face-to-face information meetings (see next page).

##### A project

Your organization - the one hosting the Food Action project - has probably already made a stakeholder analysis. But it's worth taking a fresh look, and seeking out personal contacts.

##### Actions

Make or review a stakeholder map - see Annexe 1.



##### Effects?

You will find it quick and easy to determine the best people to contact, to get the support needed to get good results. If you're part of a team, you will be able to work better together without losing time on long discussions.

## Your message

### The loner

Your basic 'ambassadorial' message is in 'What are we talking about?', above:

A not-too-big change in your eating habits is

- \* The biggest single contribution you can make to your family's health.
- \* The biggest single contribution you can make to the health of the planet.
- \* A way to save money and support your local community.
- \* And: it's easy!

Is there something specific you can add? Something that might be particularly persuasive for people in your own network?

## A project

Your project has surely crafted its own message for its own constituency. You can help keep it up to date by reporting on how people respond, and which parts of the message seem to get the best response.

### Actions

Draft or review your ambassadorial messages.

If you would like to learn more about inspiring and empowering messages, sign up for the online tutorial *Empowering Writing*. Let us know and we'll send you a link.

## Effects?

You will never be at a loss to describe the benefits of joining the Food Action program. You can take every opportunity to introduce it to new people.

If you take the *Empowering Writing* tutorial you will gain skills that can be of use both professionally and in your leisure activities.

### Empowering Writing

A course in six lessons by Global Action Plan International

#### Who this is for

If your work is focused on bringing about long-term behaviour change, and if it includes writing text to support that ambition, this course will help you. No matter whether you are composing original text (book, scripts, flyers...) or translating and adapting existing text, you will find hints to help you make your text a more effective tool.

#### Expected outcome

After you've finished the course, you will be able to hone your old and new writing to increase the chances that it will lead to sustainable behaviour change in the readers.

#### Language

The course is in English but in the assignments you will work on a text of your own, in the language of your choice.

#### So, let's go!

Start by viewing the video below on Empowering language.





## An information meeting

### The loner

The information meeting is a public or private meeting where you present the Food Action program and invite people to sign up - either individually, or in groups/teams.

1. If you opt for a private meeting, for instance in your home, you will have everything you need to hand. For a public meeting, you may want to find one or more organizations that will sponsor the event eg by offering a good place to hold it.

2. Check the calendars of the organizations on your stakeholder map, to see whether your meeting (which can be as short as one hour if necessary) can be included as *part of an event that has already been*

*planned*. It could for example be a residents' association meeting, or a parents' evening at school, or an information meeting hosted by the local authority.

3. Alternatively organize and host a *stand-alone meeting*, in which case it can be good to activate at least two potential partners. An example: a church offers use of the church hall, and one of the congregation who is a food retailer donates some tea, coffee, fruit etc. Or a food store offers use of the premises after closing time, and donates refreshments together with one of their suppliers. Or a tennis club offers use of the club-house, and a member... You get the idea. If you find no sponsor for refreshments you could still include them but ask for a small contribution from participants

### A project

Your project has surely crafted its own message for its own constituency. You can help keep it up to date by reporting on how people respond, and which parts of the message seem to get the best response.

### Actions

Draft or review your plan for who to invite.

### Effects?

At least 10% of those you invite should come to the meeting. They may bring with them some others who were not on the invitation list.

## Your invitation and program

### The loner

Depending on your partner/sponsor and target audience, you may want to select one of the sub-headings for **special emphasis**. If for instance your event is combined with municipal information about garbage sorting, you will want to emphasize the role of food waste, globally and in your community.

Look at the statistics in Section 1 and see whether you can find comparable figures for your own community.

If the event is informal, for instance in your own home, you may not need a written invitation. You will, however, benefit from having a program.

### A project

*The invitation.* You need an invitation that will fit comfortably onto a page, that will attract in particular 'early adopters' to your early meetings (see below, Social diffusion). Some examples are given in Annexe 2.

When considering to invite speakers, keep in mind that *personal experience is the best attractor*. People are more likely to sign if there is someone present who has already completed the Food Action program. For a start you can speak from your personal experience.

Generally, an invitation is most likely to be effective if it reaches each person more than once, from more than one source. Three is a good number to aim for: so you would like to distribute the invitation through 3 or 4 channels (partners from your stakeholder map). Someone who receives the same message from the food store, the church, *and* the football club will certainly pay attention!

Total time minimum 1 hour, maximum 1.5 hours. You might add a break for refreshments and a question-and-answer session, total about 2 hours.

### Follow-up

**is** of central importance! Tell how you'll do it in point 6 on the sample agenda.

### A sample agenda

1. *Welcome*: You (and partners) introduce the program and the meeting. 10-15 minutes.
2. Unless you are addressing a group where members all know each other, include an 'ice-breaker' exercise. Ca 10 minutes. See Annexe 1.
3. A short *game/group exercise* about the main topics. 15-20 minutes. See Annexe 1.
4. How can you *join the program*, and what will you need to do? What may be your benefits? 10-15 minutes including questions.
5. *Sign* the attendance sheet, enter contact details, **AND**, for those who have already decided, sign up. Ca 15 minutes.
6. Invite those who have signed up to stay for 15-20 minutes. *Thank* everyone and tell them how you will follow up the meeting. 10 minutes.

The extra time for those who have signed up is for introductions and immediate questions. They could also form teams to support each other.

## Social diffusion

### You are a change agent!

How new behaviour spreads through a population is much researched, and sometimes referred to as 'social diffusion'. From this research has emerged, among other things, the now-familiar concept of the 'change agent'.

By deciding to learn how to coach for the program, you have declared yourself a change agent in relation to Food Action. This applies to both loners and members of a project team.

If you look at the diagram, you can see that you need in the first place to recruit 'early adopters' to the program. That means: people who are already interested in broad questions of food and sustainability, who have perhaps already taken steps to adopt more sustainable food habits, and would like to do more.

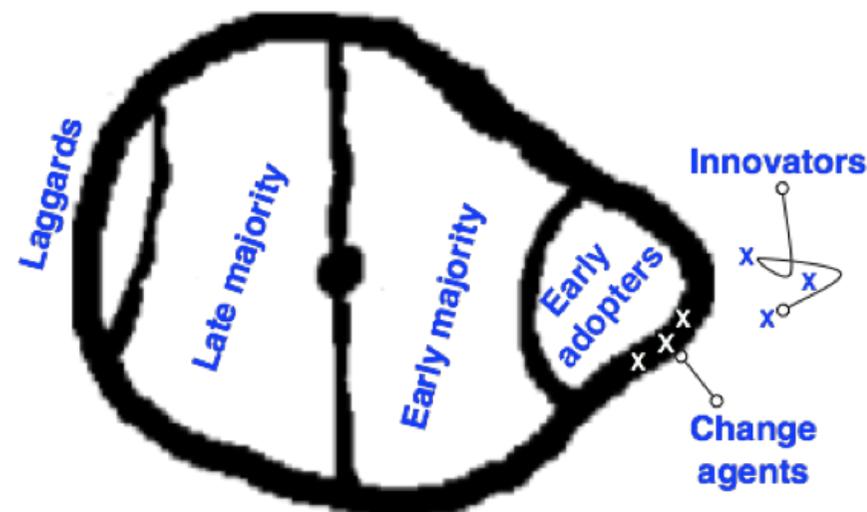
### Putting the theory to work

This is good news, since it means that in order to influence the whole community you don't need to reach 'everyone' - only the approximately 10-15% who are early adopters. They will help reach the rest of the community.

This choice of focus affects everything about how you plan your work. For instance, your choice of language.

When you are formulating an invitation to information meetings, you will use words attractive to early adopters: words like challenge, adventure, Beta Version, pioneer, trail-blazer, role model.

*To learn more, see Annexe 2*



## 4. Monitoring

### Why monitor?

The most important reason for collecting data is to be able to give feedback to the program participants.

- \* We tend to forget about the changes we have already made, and seeing them in numbers can be very empowering

Additionally, systematic data collection and analysis

- \* Is the easiest way to convince others of the usefulness of the program
- \* Provides a valuable contribution to our international database, for instance as a basis for statistics to the United Nations and to potential international funders
- \* Helps us to improve our programs

### The mechanism

As a Food Action participant you will have been invited to answer questions online. The data collected is of two kinds:

1. Contextual: about the participant's household (collected at start of program)
2. Food habits (collected at start *and* end)

### Monitoring food habits

The main part of our data collection consists of asking people about their daily food habits, before and after the program.

The data is collected on-line, so statistics are easy to produce – also internationally. Many people enjoy doing a quiz, so it's not difficult to collect the data.

The design of the questionnaire is such that

- \* There is one question for most of the actions proposed in the program
- \* Each question is either a simple yes/no question, or offers a range
- \* The range is on a scale of 1 to 5

The general format of the 1 - 5 scale is a statement: <i>I do this action</i>				
1	2	3	4	5
seldom	less than half the time	about half the time	more than half the time	always
The replies can be treated statistically because they correspond reasonably to				
0 %	25 %	50 %	75 %	100 %

## 5. Supporting participants

In this program the coach acts in the first place as an ambassador, as described above.

In some cases the coach may also take on a more intensive role, offering active support to participants who have asked for it.

### Action

Contact the person who has asked for help, either online or personally, and listen to their concerns. Follow the guidelines for Empowering Coaching.

### Effects?

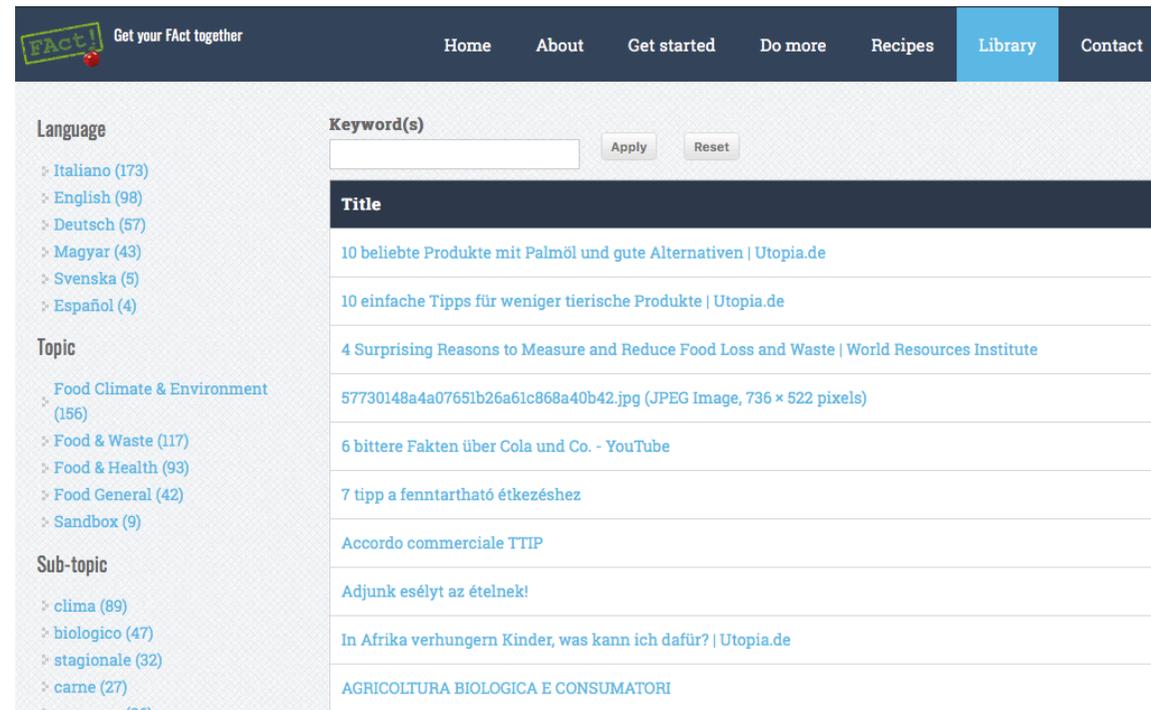
Sometimes a simple intervention – even just listening! – can be enough to make the difference between drop-out and successful participation.

## Using the FAct! library

In addition to the workbooks there is another tool to support participants with facts – the FAct! Library. It is a collection of web references of articles, reports, manuals, recipes, videos etc. You can filter the content by six languages and by the Topics of the FAct! program (waste, climate and health).

There are also sub-topics; and you can perform a key-word search.

As a coach you may come across more references to add. If so, please contact the FAct!organisation that represents your language on the contact page, and you will be guided.



The screenshot shows the FAct! Library website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the following links: Home, About, Get started, Do more, Recipes, Library (highlighted), and Contact. Below the navigation bar, the page is divided into two main sections. On the left, there are filters for Language and Topic. The Language filter lists: Italiano (173), English (98), Deutsch (57), Magyar (43), Svenska (5), and Español (4). The Topic filter lists: Food Climate & Environment (156), Food & Waste (117), Food & Health (93), Food General (42), and Sandbox (9). Below these, there is a Sub-topic filter with options: clima (89), biologico (47), stagionale (32), carne (27), and non carne (26). On the right, there is a search bar labeled 'Keyword(s)' with 'Apply' and 'Reset' buttons. Below the search bar, there is a list of search results under the heading 'Title'. The results include: '10 beliebte Produkte mit Palmöl und gute Alternativen | Utopia.de', '10 einfache Tipps für weniger tierische Produkte | Utopia.de', '4 Surprising Reasons to Measure and Reduce Food Loss and Waste | World Resources Institute', '57730148a4a07651b26a61c868a40b42.jpeg (JPEG Image, 736 x 522 pixels)', '6 bittere Fakten über Cola und Co. - YouTube', '7 tipp a fenntartható étkezéshez', 'Accordo commerciale TTIP', 'Adjunk esélyt az ételnek!', 'In Afrika verhungern Kinder, was kann ich dafür? | Utopia.de', and 'AGRICOLTURA BIOLOGICA E CONSUMATORI'.

## Key skills & techniques

### Empowerment

The basic approach on which the program builds is one of empowerment: the role of the coach is to enable and support participants to set, to reach and perhaps to surpass their own goals in relation to sustainable eating habits. Here is a very [brief video on empowerment](#).

The first coaching skill is thus to put your own ambitions on hold; not to lose sight of them, but not to imagine that they are relevant for every participant.

This sounds simple but can be very demanding. You are an ambassador, you want everyone to succeed; and it may be hard to accept that success may and indeed will look different from the perspective of each participant. Don't be discouraged if you don't always succeed. Use the experience to master the technique - mastery seldom comes overnight.

### Listen!

The test of a good coach is not what s/he says, but the quality of his or her listening. Naturally, we all listen - but how? You can improve the quality of your listening by practicing one or more methods.

One fairly well-known method is Active Listening; another is called Deep Listening™, which is the one we recommend for most coaching situations. Here is another [short video, on listening](#). See also Annexe 2.

### Team building

If you are gathering people into groups for mutual coaching and learning, you will benefit from team-building skills.

**Ice-breakers.** The first meeting in or with any group is important; and how it begins is especially important. The coach should prepare a question to be reflected upon and very briefly answered by each person, either in words or through a physical exercise.

**The opening question.** A standard opening question:  
What is your name (and affiliation, if relevant); and what made you decide to come to this meeting?  
See also Annexe 1.

### Reflection

Whenever it's time for participants to reflect on a question you can simply invite them to spend a short time (2-3 minutes) IN SILENCE (the silence is important!) reflecting on the question, and making a note if they wish. Or you can instruct them in an exercise. For instance, invite them to interview each other in pairs.

See Annexe 1 for more suggestions.

## 6. Empowerment in action

### The problem with problem-solving

*The job of an empowering coach is NOT to solve problems.* This sounds simple, but in fact it's the hardest thing for many coaches to learn – not just in theory but in practice. It's amazing how tempting it is to rush in with advice...

It's also amazing what a difference it makes. Holding back on the advice (parking!) has so many advantages.

- \* For you, the coach, it takes off the pressure. You can devote your time and attention to supporting the other person or team, instead of composing 'intelligent' advice
- \* For the person or team, it's hugely empowering to be supported to solve problems rather than having the solutions offered on a plate. It also eliminates the frustration of being offered totally irrelevant or unrealistic advice.

### The empowerment spiral

Do the 'listen - don't solve it!' rules mean that a coach should never volunteer information? No. But there are some points to remember.

- \* Asking a (new) question is usually more empowering than giving an answer
- \* Different points on the empowerment spiral – summarized in Annexe 2 – call for different kinds of input from the coach
- \* The suggestions given in this manual about what to say or do are intended as a starter kit: try them out, and see what works for you. With more and more experience, you will find your own interventions and your own style

### An empowering coach

There are four really simple principles for an empowering coach to learn:

1. Create a 'safe' and comfortable atmosphere
2. Listen more than you talk
3. Ask questions more than you give answers
4. Be kind to yourself!

It sounds simple, and it is - and, it takes practice.



## Annexe 1: Methods and tools

### Stakeholder analysis

Consider, for instance, whether you have potentially useful contacts in these areas:

- \* Residents' associations (tenants, home owners) and neighbours
- \* Local authority departments concerned with health, hygiene, garbage, education
- \* Food stores and markets
- \* Food producers and manufacturers (farms, horticulture, fisheries, bakeries...)
- \* Educators (schools, vocational training, adult education organizations, business classes, classes for the unemployed...)
- \* Church or other faith group
- \* Sports clubs
- \* Cultural associations
- \* NGOs concerned with food, health, environment, climate, citizen action

All these groupings can be interested in promoting healthier and more sustainable eating habits.

A stakeholder map could be in the form of a mind-map or entries in a data base; or it could be a simple list, for instance:

The list will be most useful if you update the status each time you make contact.



THE SAVOY.  
THE ENTR'ACTE, *log.* :—"Glad to see you together, gentlemen. You'll find this more profitable than pulling different ways."

## Ice breakers and openers

### Opening questions

A standard opening question:

*What is your name (and affiliation, if relevant); and what made you decide to come to this meeting?*

In a Food Action team you might like to get specific about food, for instance:

*What is your name (and affiliation, if relevant)?*

*Imagine this table is a buffet and you can choose one dish to put on it: what do you choose?*

Or:

*What is one food you will never eat – or never eat again?*

### Ice-breakers

#### Pick a pic

if you have a set of different photographs or other pictures of food; alternatively a pack of cards such as Indian 'medicine animal' cards (at least twice as many as the participants):  
*Which of these pictures do you find most attractive? Why?*

1. Put the cards/pictures on a table and invite everybody to choose one.
2. Sit in a circle and invite the participants to tell why they chose that particular card.

Instead of going around the circle to each participant in turn, use the 'magic ball' method (see Team building).

#### Either-Or

Get the group to stand in the middle of a large space. Then ask an either-or question and request the group to split up according to their answers. For example, ask whether they prefer a sweet or savoury treat and then request that the people who have a 'sweet tooth' to go to one end of the room while the people who have a 'savoury tooth' to go to the other end.

When the groups have assembled, invite them first to greet each other within each group (this is not introductions, just 'hi!'); and then to turn 'outward' and look to see who is in the other group.

Ask another either-or question, but this time ask the people to congregate at the sides of the room so that everyone has to change position.

Prepare a set of 5–8 either-or questions in advance. You can have up to four categories – one for each corner of the room. Start with neutral ones, like 'which city/district do you come from'. It's good to end with a 'food' question, for instance: who is vegan, who is vegetarian, who is pescatarian, who is omnivore?

#### Common ground

Divide the participants into groups of 3–5. The task of each group is to find 10 things that all members of the group have in common with each other. (A restriction you may want to put is that you're not allowed to list obvious or common human characteristics like I drink water, I have teeth, or I am wearing socks.)

After about 15 minutes, each group will go around and share their list of common items with the other groups.

## Team building

### Magic ball

This is an excellent way for the coach to step back from being seen as 'the leader' and engage the whole group. Use it to ensure that all participants are heard, without stress.

1. The coach has an invisible/imaginary ball that s/he tosses to the person who volunteers to start
2. The volunteer presents his/her answer very briefly – say, 60 seconds (the coach can set a good example by giving her/his answer before asking for a volunteer)
3. The volunteer suggests the next person to respond, and throws the ball to them (if they agree to catch it!)

...and so on, until all have responded.

If this is the first introduction/opening question, and the participants have interviewed each other, then the volunteer will present *the person s/he interviewed* – identifying that person clearly.

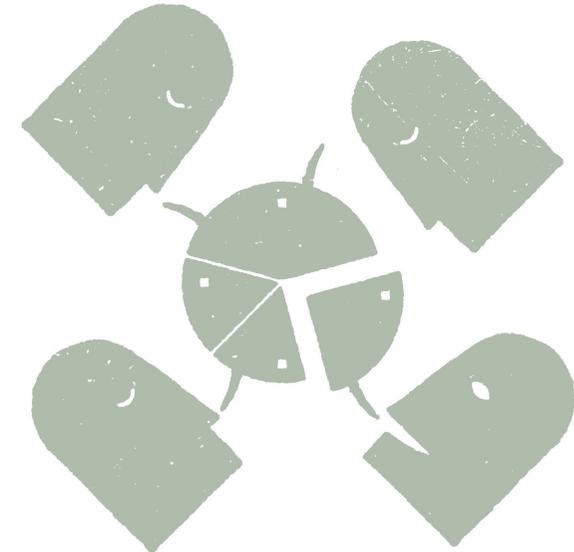
### Fleck's Synergy Method for discussions

For a team meeting that is effective as well as enjoyable, try the Synergy method. The crucial difference from an ordinary meeting is the dynamic agenda.

#### Stage 1: Agenda building

One person facilitates agenda building. Each person tells the facilitator what topics he or she brings to the meeting. These are written as an agenda in a way visible to everyone, for example on flip-chart, blackboard or whiteboard, as follows:

Name of person	Topic	Estimated time



The time estimate is made by the person suggesting the topic.

The time required for the topics is totalled and written on the agenda, and the total is compared with the time available for the meeting. The remaining time available needs to be a few minutes more than the sum of the topics to allow for moving from one topic to another. If there is enough time for all topics as requested, proceed to the actual meeting. Otherwise, go to Negotiations.

## Stage 2: Negotiations

The facilitator asks the group to fit the topics into the time available. Only the person presenting a topic can decide to change its time, so a negotiation ensues. This itself takes time, so the time available for the topics 'shrinks'. The negotiation is however valuable in itself, and usually agreement is reached within a few minutes.

The revised times are written on the agenda. They are a contract between participants that the times will not be exceeded.

## Stage 3: Dealing with the topics

The facilitator invites the group to consider the agenda and choose ONE topic. Which topic seems most appropriate? Which person clearly wants to be next?

The topic presenter then controls the meeting for the agreed time. Other participants are viewed as a resource for that person. At the end of the agreed time, the topic is closed and the group is once again invited to choose ONE topic to continue with.

## Devil's advocate

It is sometimes useful to bring out the fears of the group by playfully identifying all the reasons why they may **not** succeed. The first and often only effect is to shine a light on fears that prove unrealistic: 'I've been worrying that we wouldn't get new recruits but now I see it shouldn't be too difficult.'

There is of course always the possibility of exposing a real threat or risk; which is the first step to dealing with it - for example by revising time plans or reducing the ambition level. It is more empowering to take one small action successfully than to start several large, unsuccessful actions.

## Brainstorming

A fast, energizing, and effective way to work is to use a variation of brainstorming. The basic question for participants is: *Why will we never succeed?*

The usual brainstorming rules apply:

- \* Everything is permitted
- \* No discussion or argument (only questions for clarification)
- \* All suggestions written on a place visible to all participants

Encourage participants to find really challenging answers, potential problems, as well as the usual emphasis on creativity and 'crazy' ideas. The atmosphere should be light and 'fun', not heavy or depressive. 'Big' problems are greeted with enthusiasm and applause.

## First feedback

Ask how participants feel. Overall responses range from "It really doesn't seem possible" to "Nothing worse than this? We can handle it!"

If the general feeling is that the action or project is really not feasible, you can explore alternative ways of achieving the desired results. However the most usual response is of relief at having shared fears and concerns

## Time for reflection

### The question

You can simply invite each participant to spend a short time (2-3 minutes) IN SILENCE (the silence is important!) reflecting on the question, and making a note if they wish.

Or you can instruct them in an exercise. For instance, invite them to interview each other in pairs (3-4 minutes each, tell them when to switch roles) or in groups of 3-5.

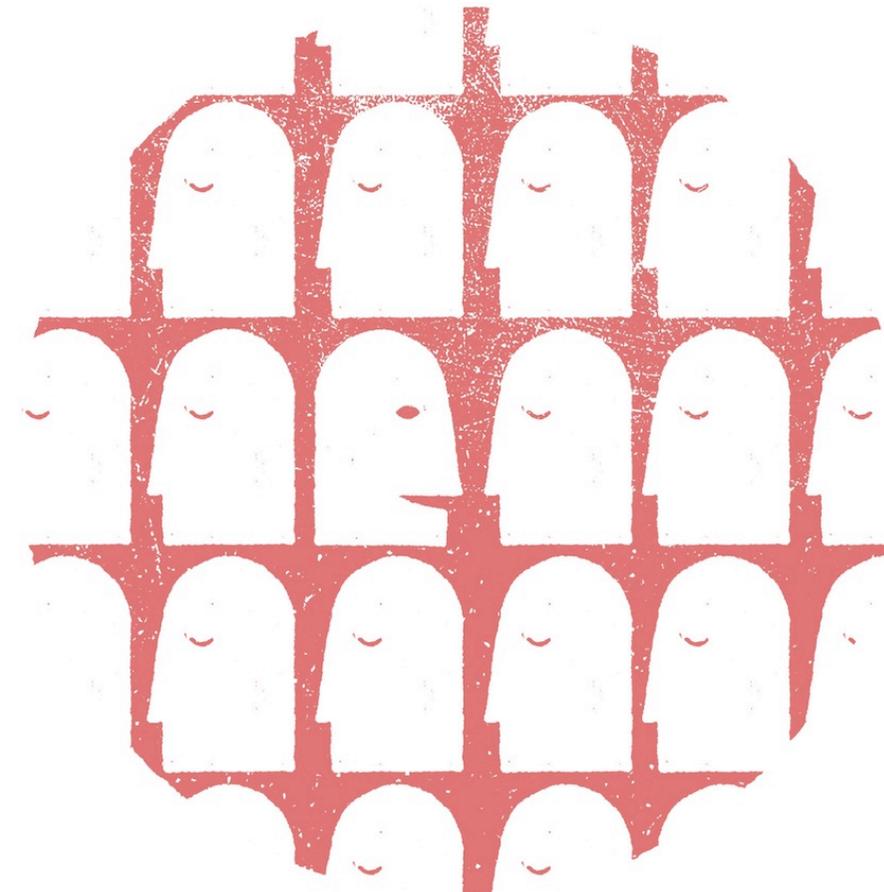
### Answering in small meetings

Try the Magic Ball method (see Team-building) for meetings with up to 15-18 people.

For bigger meetings  
Have the reflection in groups of 3-5.  
Invite each group to delegate someone to present a summary of their conclusions.

**Time-keeping** is important. Say how much time is 'allowed' - for instance, 90 seconds - and make it a game:

support the meeting to praise people or groups whose presentation is really short. If any one person speaks for 'too' long, others will become bored and stop listening; so interrupt gently if necessary.





## An empowering coach

There are four really simple principles for an empowering coach to learn:

1. Create a 'safe' and comfortable atmosphere
2. Listen more than you talk
3. Ask questions more than you give answers
4. Be kind to yourself! It sounds simple, but it takes practice.

### Create a safe space

The person or people you are coaching need to feel able to ask for and give mutual support. Your major tools are:

- \* Trust in the wisdom of the process
- \* Ability to 'park' your own concerns and beliefs, particularly your judgements
- \* A willingness and ability to respectfully interrupt aggression or negative criticism, and turn the energy behind it to constructive use

### Listen

Take a look at the section on Listening in Annexe 2. Perhaps you will be inspired to learn and practice a new technique. In summary:

- \* Listen attentively and with respect
- \* Let the speaker see that you hear and understand them
- \* If it seems they are stuck in a problem, don't try to solve it! – ask whether they in fact see any possibility for action
- \* If appropriate, recall for them the power of their own hopes, vision, positive experiences

To do this successfully, you need to be on the alert for your own problems and fears. Recognizing them can help you to empathize; not recognizing them can interfere with your communication.

### Keep a solution focus

Speak from the heart...

- \* Ask questions!
  - \* "Be yourself". Acknowledge to yourself your emotional responses to what happens, and practice parking: stay with the process.
  - \* When you need to bring up a tricky question: take a deep breath and say what you're feeling. Use "I" and "me" statements – not "you".
- And remember to keep returning to a focus on solutions – not problems.

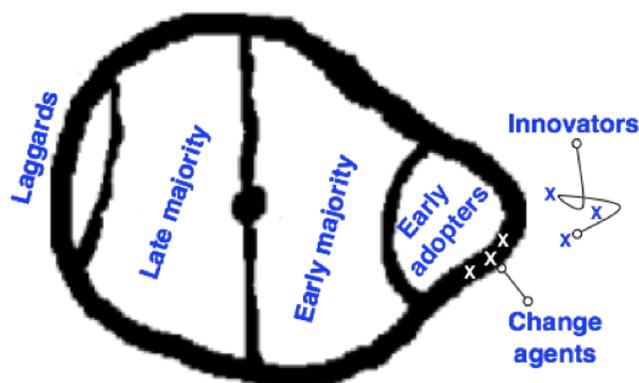
### Be kind to yourself

All of this is easier to say than to do. Give yourself a pat on the back when it goes well, but without blaming yourself when you realize it didn't go so well. More important is the ability to notice whether you're doing well or not, and thus to learn from your own experience.

## Annexe 2: Theory

### Social diffusion

How new behaviour spreads through a population is much researched, and sometimes referred to as 'social diffusion'. From this research has emerged, among other things, the concept of the 'change agent'.



### Criteria for diffusion of innovation

The critical phase is getting from early adopters to early majority, which depends heavily on these criteria:

1. *Relative Advantage* – Is the innovation better than the status quo? Will people perceive it as better? If not, the innovation will not spread quickly, if at all
2. *Compatibility* – How does the innovation fit with people's past experiences and present needs? If it doesn't fit both well, it won't spread well. Does it require a change in existing values? If members of the culture feel as though they have to become very different people to adopt the innovation, they will be more resistant to it
3. *Complexity* – How difficult is the innovation to understand and apply? The more difficult, the slower the adoption process
4. *Trialability* – Can people "try out" the innovation first? Or must they commit to it all at once? If the latter, people will be far more cautious about adopting it
5. *Observability* – How visible are the results of using it? If people adopt it, can the difference be discerned by others? If not, the innovation will spread more slowly

### Focus on the early adopters

A 'change agent' is sometimes also referred to as a 'first follower'. There's a little video illustrating [the role of a first follower, here](#).

From the theory it becomes clear that the most effective way for a change agent to introduce and spread a new program is through the *early adopters*. When you are successful you will shift your focus to the early majority.

This choice of focus affects everything about your work. For instance, choice of language. When you are inviting people to your first information meetings, you will use words attractive to early adopters: words like challenge, adventure, Beta test, pioneer, trail-blazer, role model.

If you would like to learn more about use of empowering language, you are welcome to sign up for the 'empowering writing' course. [Let us know](#) and we'll send you a link.

## Listening

The test of a good coach is not what s/he says, but the quality of his or her listening. Naturally, we all listen - but how? Different methods are available to improve the quality of listening.

One fairly well-known method is Active Listening; another is called Deep Listening™, which is the one we recommend for most coaching situations.

**Active Listening** is a communication technique requiring that the listener fully concentrates, understands, responds and then remembers what is being said. Eye contact is important, and so is the 'reading' of the speaker's body language.

*Reflective* listening is a variety or subset of active listening where the listener repeats back to the speaker what they have just heard, to confirm understanding of both parties.

Active and Reflective Listening are successfully used in counselling,

training, and conflict handling, not least in schools. We go no further into them here, but choose instead to focus on Deep Listening because it offers a tool not only for listening to others but also for listening to ourselves.

## Deep Listening™

Deep Listening is both new, and a very old tool for coaching. It is about hearing the other (or yourself) without the kind of censorship exercised by experience, expectations and preconceived opinions.

The originator of Deep Listening, Warren Ziegler, described several principles for successful listening, including these two:

- 1. Be Silence.** Ziegler wrote: "Do not respond in any way to the talker, either with words or with body language. Look away. No eye contact. Deep listening is not something you do, not a task but a state of being. Thus, be silence throughout your whole being."
- 2. Be non-judgmental.** This can be a difficult practice when the talker offers

images (values, ideas, intentions) in conflict with yours. But it is essential if you are to allow the other to come to the fullness of her images before judgment is rendered, whether her judgment or yours.

## Parking

Good listening pre-supposes a particular skill: that of 'parking' your own responses in order to continue listening without interruption from internal voices. Our internal responses are so automatic and so familiar that we hardly notice them. They mostly come in three categories:

- \* Feelings in response to the speaker
- \* Thoughts in response to the speaker
- \* Irrelevant personal thoughts or feelings (eg "When's lunch??")

## Parking feelings

It comes as a surprise to many people that our feelings can be safely parked until needed: we don't have to allow them to drive us.

Why should we want to park? Well, emotions, like money and many other



things in life, are magnificent servants and tyrannical masters. Feelings are tremendously useful when they signal that something is going on, and help to understand and empathize with other people. They also can give energy – or steal it.

Any situation can trigger feelings, positive or negative. They come in waves: first an emotional response to the actual situation, then a wave of fossil feelings (“This has happened to me before”), then often feelings about the feelings (“Darn, now I got upset again, why do I do that?”).

The second- and third-wave feelings are generally energy-stealers. They can cause problems when acted upon, because they can be difficult for the other person to understand: they are

The word  
LISTEN  
contains  
the same letters  
as the word  
SILENT.

— Alfred Brendel

internal and invisible, not obviously related to what is going on.

There’s nothing wrong with anger, or sadness, sympathy, guilt, or any other feeling; and, there is no need to deal with them in the moment. They can be swiftly acknowledged – and parked for future reference, so that you can continue to listen.

### Parking thoughts

One reason that thoughts can intrude into listening is a feeling of

responsibility: the feeling that as a coach I will need to be able to say something intelligent and helpful. It’s easy to become so ‘busy’ thinking out possible responses that listening is blocked. In fact, you can relax – an empowering coach is not required to solve problems! (Easier said than done, and well worth practicing.)

Another source of interference is what Warren Ziegler called ‘your biography’: your experience, beliefs, values, knowledge. Any item from your past may beg for attention:

- \* I too had an experience just like that!
- \* I can’t believe you would find it that difficult
- \* From what you’re saying, maybe you’re not a very nice person
- \* That’s simply not true!

Any one of these responses might be valid, in an intellectual sense; but you’ll never know for sure if you stop listening. Park!

### The compelling question

*“Do not respond in any way to the talker, either with words or with body language. Look away. No eye contact.”* Does this mean you can never speak?

Ziegler described an exception, which he called the ‘compelling question’. A question comes into your mind, and without clarification it’s hard to continue listening. For instance, ‘Did

that happen before or after...?' Phrase the question so that there is no hint of judgment, or preference for one response rather than another.

Hint: if you give the question a little time (before asking it), you may find that it answers itself!

### Listening to myself

Each of us has knowledge that we usually either are not aware of, have no access to, or don't trust. We talk about gut feelings, about intuition. In many languages there is an expression like 'I need to sleep on it', acknowledging that new insights may arise spontaneously.



## Empowerment

[The Empowerment spiral video](#)

### The Empowerment model

If we look at the basic model, we see that there are six points at which a coach can intervene:

#### 1. **Caring**

You can demonstrate that you care about the team by listening carefully to them; and you can demonstrate that you care about the topic – for instance, Food Waste – by being prepared to share your own experience of food waste.

#### 2. **Help formulate questions**

As the team learns more the members will have questions. You can help them refine their questions, for instance by asking what knowledge or information would really make a difference to their choice of eating habits; and asking how they might find the answers.

#### 3. **Find out**

You can of course refer them to the Food Action on-line reference library. You may also have other ideas – and you can ask them where they might start looking.

#### 4. **Help formulate intention**

When they have enough information, they will most likely want to take action. To get from *wanting* to *doing*, it helps to formulate an intention: you ask them what they will do, when they will do it, whether they need extra help or resources. You can also ask them how they will evaluate the success of the action, especially if it's a big one.

#### 5. **Take action**

The Food Action program is designed as a set of 'invitations' to experiment with eating habits. You can encourage them to identify the actions that would most easily fit into their and their families' present lifestyle. You can also encourage them to think of other things to do, perhaps not mentioned in the program.

#### 6. **See results**

You can support them to do the quizzes: to record their habits before and after doing the program; and ask how they feel about the results. You can also share information: what other teams and other countries have done.

