

Corollaries of Invitational Theory

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Invitational Theory is a theory of practice. It is designed to create and maintain human environments that summon people to realize their relatively boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor. It seeks to explain the nature of “signal systems” that summon forth the realization of human potential as well as for identifying and changing those forces that defeat and destroy potential.

A defining quality of Invitational Theory is that it is counter-intuitive: it assumes that people are always motivated. It also assumes that people choose their behavior, and that they do the best and safest things they can from their perspective at the moment of acting. Therefore, cordial summons offer the best opportunity to be a beneficial presence in the life of oneself and others, personally and professionally.

Invitational Theory is anchored on four principles (respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality) and identifies levels of functioning, choices, and dimensions involved in any human interaction. The following are principles and corollaries of Invitational Theory.

PRINCIPLES

OPTIMISM

- ❖ Human potential, though not always apparent, is always there, waiting to be discovered and invited forth.
- ❖ To be inviting in a disinviting environment is to change the environment.
- ❖ Even if everything is working against what should and could be done, even the smallest inviting act has the power to make a positive difference.
- ❖ Challenges, problems, concerns, even “impossibilities” may be invitations in disguise.
- ❖ There are few conditions that humans cannot transcend provided they are suitably invited to do so.

RESPECT

- ❖ The price of any invitation is respect for the other person’s right to modify or decline it.
- ❖ Invitational Theory can easily be corrupted by those who have learned its processes but not its principles.
- ❖ What people may want most in life is to be invited to the celebration of their value, ability and self-directing powers.
- ❖ People do not invite objects: with objects, such terms as “motivate,” “build,” “shape,” “modify,” “enhance,” “turn on,” “empower,” and “reinforce” are used.

- ❖ The two criteria of any invitation is to ask: "Is it caring, and is it appropriate?"

TRUST

- ❖ An invitation provides the opportunity to develop trust.
- ❖ To be inviting it is necessary to trust the inviting process.
- ❖ Trust is based primarily on the memory of invitations sent, received and acted upon successfully.
- ❖ As trust develops, invitations move from simple and short-ranged to complex and long-ranged.

INTENTIONALITY

- ❖ All the beautiful thoughts in the world will not add up to a single inviting act.
- ❖ An invitation is never an accident; it is a choice someone made, a chance someone took.
- ❖ To be intentionally inviting when others are being disinviting is the hallmark of professionalism.
- ❖ Some people wish, others want, successful people invite.
- ❖ Good intentions are not always good invitations.
- ❖ When the opportunity is ripe, invite; there may never be another chance.

LEVELS

INTENTIONALLY DISINVITING

- ❖ The English language is the richest on earth on ways to disinvite, yet virtually silent on ways to invite.
- ❖ People are more disinvited than they are disadvantaged, disabled, or undisciplined.
- ❖ Inviting people are memorable, disinviting people are unforgettable.
- ❖ A series of disinvites makes being invisible very inviting.
- ❖ People who have been disinvited are more likely to disinvite others.
- ❖ The greatest barrier to being inviting with others is being disinviting with oneself.

INTENTIONALLY INVITING

- ❖ Life is never so busy that there is not time for an inviting act.

- ❖ To be inviting requires patience, the world was not created in a day and neither are people.
- ❖ You may be inviting too early, but that is better than being inviting too late.
- ❖ The manner in which an invitation is sent may be more inviting than the invitation itself.

CHOICES

SENDING

- ❖ Ask not that the invitation be accepted, ask for the courage to invite.
- ❖ To an emotionally starving person, the smallest invitation can be a feast.
- ❖ Don't decide in advance about a person's response, invite that person to choose.
- ❖ Human potential is everywhere, but nothing happens until invitations are sent.
- ❖ Conditional invitations elicit conditional acceptance.

NOT SENDING

- ❖ The unwillingness to invite can be as lethal as the willingness to disinvite.
- ❖ Using the failure of others to invite is no excuse for not inviting.
- ❖ Guarantee: One-hundred percent of the invitations not sent will not be accepted.
- ❖ Among the greatest tragedies of life is not having the opportunity to accept invitations.
- ❖ Better to invite and be rejected, than never to invite and be dejected.

ACCEPTING

- ❖ Some people have a difficult time accepting invitations; they mask this difficulty by pretending that they do not want to be invited.
- ❖ To invite is to risk rejection, to accept is to risk deception.
- ❖ When an invitation is accepted and good things happen, the likelihood that future invitations will be accepted is enhanced.
- ❖ The more explicit an invitation, the more it lends itself to acceptance.
- ❖ Accepting an invitation requires a match between the sender's invitation and the receiver's perception of what is inviting.

NOT ACCEPTING

- ❖ There is an important difference between not accepting an invitation and rejecting it.

- ❖ Invitations are sometimes not accepted for reasons that have nothing to do with the inviter.
- ❖ Because some invitations are accepted or rejected does not mean that all will be.
- ❖ Some invitations are not accepted for fear of being unable to live up to expectations.
- ❖ Not accepting an invitation may be a way of eliciting an alternate one.

DIMENSIONS

INVITING ONESELF

- ❖ Being disinviting to oneself to please others pleases no one.
- ❖ Listen carefully for life's whispered invitations; they are everywhere.
- ❖ Think of the nicest invitation you could send to others and send it to yourself.
- ❖ The smallest invitation accepted is often the beginning of the greatest enterprise.
- ❖ One of the best ways to invite oneself is to invite others, and vice versa.

INVITING OTHERS

- ❖ Inviting comes from courage, and courage comes from caring.
- ❖ Those who are most likely to benefit from being invited are often the most difficult to invite.
- ❖ Leadership is the ability to dream great dreams, and to invite others to share in them.
- ❖ Some people do not have the courage to invite until someone invites them first.
- ❖ Dearest friends were once total strangers, and it all began with an invitation.
- ❖ Stained glass is to sunshine as invitations are to living.

Increasingly, Invitational Theory is finding its way into health care facilities, management work places, education at all levels, parenting, and leadership. Wherever it goes it carries the message that human potential, although not always evident, is always there, waiting to be discovered and summoned forth. Equally important, it is a theory of practice that offers concrete, practical, safe and successful ways to accomplish its stated purpose of realizing human potential in all worthwhile areas of human functioning.