

GENERATIONS over dinner



Planning Guide



**SUCCESSFULLY
AGING AND LIVING
IN SAN ANTONIO**

An Initiative of the San Antonio Area Foundation
John L. Santikos Charitable Foundation

About SALSA

Successfully Aging and Living in San Antonio (SALSA), an initiative of the San Antonio Area Foundation, is a dynamic network of individuals and organizations working together to ensure older adults in San Antonio are respected, thrive and enjoy connected lives. SALSA champions positive aging and creates opportunities for older adults to stay engaged within the community.

SALSA focuses on:

- Promoting a culture of positive aging
- Providing educational resources
- Informing and influencing policy
- Catalyzing community collaboration
- Guiding philanthropic efforts

Through initiatives like **Generations Over Dinner**, SALSA promotes connection via education, volunteerism, training, and social engagement. By hosting quarterly dinners and training community facilitators to organize their own events, SALSA is helping to build stronger, more connected communities – bringing together the young, the old, and everyone in between.

Our gratitude to the project’s founders, Michael Hebb and Chip Conley, for their guidance and wisdom, and to Mr. Pat Whitty of Breaking Age, whose partnership and support were instrumental in getting this effort off the ground.

A digital version of the Planning Guide, including handouts can be found at saafdn.org/generations. For questions, to share reflections from your own dinners, or to connect further, please contact us at salsa@saafdn.org.

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This planning guide includes facilitator and organizational toolkits with practical suggestions and guidance for hosting a Generations Over Dinner event. Through our own experiences – learning by trial and error – we’ve discovered what works well and what doesn’t. The good news is that these dinners can be hosted on any budget; at their core, they simply require people coming together to share a conversation.

The Generations

The Greatest Generation — Born 1901–1924

The Silent Generation — Born 1925–1945

Baby Boomers — Born 1946–1964

Generation X — Born 1965–1980

Millennials (Generation Y) — Born 1981–1996

Generation Z — Born 1997–2012

Gen Alpha — Born 2013–2024

GENERATIONS over dinner

Generations Over Dinner transforms the simple act of sharing a meal into a catalyst for profound social change. This innovative initiative brings together people across age groups – from teenagers to centenarians – around carefully curated dinner conversations that bridge generational divides and combat the epidemic of social isolation devastating our communities.

These dinners create opportunities to challenge age-related stereotypes and cultivate mutual respect. At each gathering, participants engage in guided dialogues about life experiences, values, dreams, and challenges. Through the universal language of storytelling over food, strangers become neighbors, assumptions transform into understanding, and individuals discover vibrant community connections that extend far beyond the dinner table.

Why This Matters: The Loneliness Epidemic

We're facing an unprecedented crisis of social isolation in America. The former United States Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, declared loneliness a public health epidemic equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. This challenge is compounded by rapid demographic changes and increasing age segregation in our communities.

The statistics are sobering:

- Over 35% of adults 45+ report chronic loneliness. ([AARP Foundation](#))
- Intergenerational contact has decreased by 40% in the past two decades. ([Aging and Mental Health](#))
- Social isolation increases risk of premature death by 26%. ([Campbell Systematic Reviews](#))
- Age segregation in housing, work, and social environments continues accelerating. ([National Library of Medicine](#))

**“The most important conversations always
happen over a shared meal.”**

—Michael Symon, Chef & Restaurateur

The Vision: Breaking Down the Silos

Communities across America face growing intergenerational disconnection. While many cultures have traditionally valued both elder wisdom and youthful energy, modern society has created invisible barriers between age groups. We increasingly live in age-segregated neighborhoods, work in age-similar environments, and socialize primarily within our generational cohorts.

The implications reach far beyond social connection – intergenerational disconnection contributes to knowledge gaps, reduces community resilience, and limits our collective problem-solving capacity. When generations operate in isolation, we lose the benefit of diverse perspectives, accumulated wisdom, and fresh innovation that comes from meaningful cross-age collaboration.

Generations Over Dinner deliberately breaks down these silos by:

- Creating intentional spaces for meaningful cross-generational dialogue
- Building empathy and understanding between different age groups
- Combating ageism and generational stereotypes through personal storytelling

The Ripple Effect

When we bridge generational divides, entire communities benefit. Research shows that intergenerational programs:

- Reduce depression and isolation among older adults by 30%
- Improve academic and social outcomes for young people
- Increase civic participation across all age groups
- Strengthen neighborhood cohesion and mutual support
- Preserve cultural knowledge and traditions

Testimonial

“I had such a lovely time sitting at a dinner table with guests of various ages from Gen Z to Baby Boomers. Together we learned that we had a lot more in common than any of us expected to. As we ate, we shared stories and memories of our lives. We shared laughs and tears in a space that felt safe and warm.” —Janice, age 24, Gen Z

Join the Initiative

Why Host?

Hosting a Generations Over Dinner event brings people together in a simple yet powerful way: a shared meal and a guided conversation that spans generations – giving your community, organization, or family the chance to:

- Bridge generational gaps and reduce stereotypes.
- Foster belonging and understanding across ages.
- Spark meaningful dialogue on life, values, and today’s pressing issues.
- Pass down wisdom and stories while gaining fresh perspectives.
- Strengthen your community with deeper human connection.

What’s in it for Me (or My Organization)?

Generations Over Dinner is more than just a meal – it’s an experience that elevates your mission.

- **For organizations:** Demonstrates commitment to community building, social connection, and inclusion.
- **For faith-based organizations:** Strengthens intergenerational faith and fellowship.
- **For families, friends, & neighbors:** Creates memorable moments of listening, laughter, and shared wisdom.

Simply Put

- **The Format:** 6–8 people, 3+ generations, gathered around a table for two hours of guided conversation.
- **The Meal:** Simple, family-style – bread and butter, salad, entrée, and dessert.
- **The Flexibility:** Breakfast, lunch, or dinner; one table or many; hosted anywhere.

Key Roles

- **Facilitator:** 1 per table, guides conversation flow.
- **Participants:** 6–7 people per table, ages 12 and up.
- **Host:** Welcomes, sets the scene, provides logistics.
- **Event Coordinator:** Overall event planning, registration management, communications, volunteer coordination, day-of troubleshooting.
- **Volunteers:** Set-up, serving, and clean-up – allowing participants to stay focused on conversation.

Testimonial

“I came not knowing what to expect, but I left feeling hopeful. Hearing stories from both a 15-year-old and a 90-year-old at my table reminded me that we all have something to share and something to learn.”

—Jessica, age 55, Gen X



Facilitator Toolkit

Welcome Facilitator!

Thank you for stepping into this meaningful role. By accepting this invitation, you're helping create a space where connection, courage, and cross-generational wisdom can thrive.

Your mission is simple yet powerful: Make it easier for participants to show up as their full selves, listen deeply, and share authentically. The word facilitate comes from the Latin *facil*, meaning to make easy. You're not here to have all the answers – you're here to hold the space with care, curiosity, and heart.

Core Facilitator Responsibilities:

- Create psychological safety from the start
- Guide conversation flow using the provided script
- Encourage equitable participation
- Model the Eight Core Principles
- Hold space for emotions without trying to “fix”
- Ensure everyone feels heard and appreciated



Core Principles: Expectations Of Presence

Before any meaningful conversation can take place, we need to agree on how we will be with one another. These *Expectations of Presence* are not rules – they are shared understandings that help create a safe, respectful, and generative space. As a facilitator, these are not only expectations you'll invite others to embrace, but ways of being you'll embody yourself.

Take time to explore each expectation. In the meantime, we invite you to reflect on what each expectation means to you personally.

- **BE FULLY PRESENT, EXTENDING AND PRESUMING WELCOME** Set aside distractions from yesterday and tomorrow. Welcome others into the space and presume you are welcome, too. Your full attention is the foundation of connection.
- **LISTEN GENEROUSLY** Listen to both words and feelings. As Quaker Douglas Steere says, *“To listen another’s soul into life... may be almost the greatest gift we can offer to another.”*
- **WE COME AS EQUALS** We don’t have the same gifts or experiences, but no one’s story matters more than another’s.
- **IT IS NEVER “SHARE OR DIE”** You’re always invited to share but never required to. Participation is personal and optional.
- **NO FIXING** We’re not here to offer solutions or therapy. We’re here to offer presence and curiosity.
- **SUSPEND JUDGMENT** Hold space between reaction and response. Create room to hear each other – and yourself – more fully.
- **TURN TO WONDER** If you find yourself judging, ask:
“I wonder what’s beneath that story? I wonder what this is stirring in me?”
- **EMBRACE CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT** Welcome difference. Lean into diverse perspectives with curiosity and care.

Essential Guidelines

Create Psychological Safety

- Set the tone from the start: your presence matters more than your perfection.
- Reinforce that all voices are welcome and respected.
- Model vulnerability, authenticity, and non-judgment.

Guide, Don't Dominate

- You are not the “leader” of the conversation – you are its steward.
- Resist the urge to fill silence or offer commentary after each person speaks.
- Your goal is to *make the conversation easier*, not to control it.

Stick to the Structure

- Use the script as your anchor – it provides clarity and flow.
- Don't skip the opening ancestor question or closing appreciation. These create a meaningful arc.
- One question at a time. Let it breathe.

Encourage Equitable Participation

- Gently draw out quieter voices with invitations like, “*Is there anything you'd like to add?*”
- Redirect talkative participants if needed: “*Let's hear from someone we haven't heard from yet.*”
- Let people pass. Consent and comfort are more important than completeness.

Honor the Power of Silence

- Silence is not awkward – it's spacious.
- Give people time to think, reflect, and feel.
- Don't rush to move on or rescue the quiet.

Model the Expectations of Presence

- Your behavior sets the standard. Show curiosity, patience, and deep listening.
- Refer back to the Expectations if needed to reset the tone gently.
- Be aware of your own internal responses – stay grounded and open.

Hold the Space, Not the Spotlight

- Resist the temptation to teach, fix, or steer.
- Your role is to hold the container: a space for people to show up fully and safely.
- Trust the process. The conversations often go deeper than you can predict.

Stay Calm and Flexible

- Conversations may veer into unexpected or emotional places.
- You don't need to have answers.
- You only need to hold space and keep it respectful.
- Flex with time, emotions, and energy – while keeping a steady hand on the flow.

The Three Vaults of Communication

Understanding these vaults helps us become more mindful communicators and more trustworthy listeners.

- **Vault 1: Surface-Level Sharing**
Small talk, such as the weather or sports. Social filler to ease into connection.
- **Vault 2: Stories**
Personal anecdotes – what happened on the way to work, a family memory, a funny moment.
- **Vault 3: Deep Sharing**
Sharing vulnerable truths about who we are – our hopes, fears, values, and beliefs. This vault only opens in environments of trust and safety. Invite participants to listen and speak from their Third Vault – only as much as they are comfortable.

Throughout the course of the dinner, finding a balance of all three vaults is key. The more people reach the third vault, the more emotionally connected everyone feels with one another.



Outline of Flow

Sample Timeline for 6:00–8:00 PM Dinner

Pre-set bread, butter, dressing, salad

5:45–6:15 PM – Gather & Mingle

6:15–6:20 PM – Welcome & Opening Remarks (by host or facilitator)

6:20 PM – Facilitator takes over at table

Required opening for every dinner: Honor a generational ancestor. Think of a person who is no longer alive who has had a powerful positive impact on your life. Take a couple minutes to tell us about this person and share the impact they had on your life. Facilitator models: “My name is [Name], I’m from the [x] Generation, and the person who comes to mind is...”

#1 AGEISM: Share with the table one misconception you think people have about your generation...or stereotypes that you hold about other generations.

#2 QUICK FIRE: What makes you feel most alive? Dancing, Music, Nature, Exercise

#3 FAMILY: As we think about how different generations go about their lives – looking back – is there something different that you do from how your parents did in their life?

6:45PM – **ENTREE** served in family style bowls to be passed around at each table

#4 PURPOSE: We feel more alive when we have purpose in our lives – Studies show that having a core purpose in your life adds seven years to your expected life span. Our purpose is often related to a natural gift or talent we have always had within us. Do you think you have a gift?

#5 QUICK FIRE: The CDC reports that only 1 out of 3 people have a clear reason to get up in the morning. What makes you jump out of bed in the morning? If you don’t have an obvious example, what do you think would make you jump out of bed in the morning? (Source: Richard Leider)

#6 Do you love what you do (for work, for family, for volunteering)? If so, what about your work that gives you a sense of purpose? What in your life brings you meaning?

7:20 PM – **DESSERT** (served plated or plated at table by facilitator)

Required Closing for every dinner: Closing Appreciation

This begins with the facilitator turning to the person on their left (or right) and telling them something they admire or respect about them. This will start a chain reaction that continues around the table, each person in turn admiring someone sitting on their left, until everyone has been appreciated.

7:45–8:00 PM – Reconvene with all participants & share feedback on the experience.
Complete Survey.

At the Dinner

- Greeter welcomes guests at the door and checks them in.
- Facilitators greet guests at their table and initiate light conversation to make everyone feel welcome.
- Facilitators help guests introduce themselves to one another.

Welcome & Opening Remarks (Suggested Talking Points, 3–5 minutes)

- There's an epidemic of loneliness and isolation in our country.
- We are currently living in a society with seven generations, but often in silos.
- We don't talk with each other – we talk *about* each other.
- Tonight is an opportunity to connect – to build bridges across generations.
- This is a social experiment: the goal is to leave the dinner having been seen, heard, and appreciated.
- A trained facilitator is at each table to guide the conversation using a script of prompts/questions.
- There are no right or wrong answers – just honest responses.
- Conversations are voluntary – share at the level you're comfortable with.
- Call attention to Expectations of Presence (handout printed on table).
- Mention Three Vaults (p. 9), if appropriate.



Table Welcome – Facilitator Sets the Scene

- Opening the Table with a warm, genuine introduction.
- Keep the End in Mind – Ensure everyone has had a chance to contribute meaningfully. Gently draw out quieter voices.
- You are a steward of the conversation, not the center of it.
- Suggest a 2-minute limit per response. Consider using a hand gesture to indicate time.
- Consider using “Polishing the Pearl” (rubbing hands together) to affirm and appreciate responses. Verbally responding to everyone takes too much time.
- Lead with Vulnerability – Your openness sets the tone. Share something meaningful from your own Third Vault (p. 9) to model safety.
- Ask Inclusive, Open-Ended Questions – Choose questions that all generations can answer. Prepare a few deeper prompts to draw out meaningful reflection.
- Trust the Process – Don’t force or rush it. Don’t try to control too much
 - Just love and lift-up those at your table.
- Honor Everyone at the Table – Everyone has wisdom to offer. Learn from them. Listen well.



Closing Appreciation

The Closing Appreciation is the heart of the evening. This moment is the fulfillment of the event's purpose – to bridge generations, to truly see one another, and to express what so often goes unsaid in daily life. Each person will turn to a person next to them and share one thing they admire or appreciate about them, while the rest of the table quietly observes. This can be based on something they said, how they said it, or a trait or quality about the person you admire.

This may be an unfamiliar or even uncomfortable moment for some. We're asking people to take a risk – one of kindness and vulnerability. Your role as a facilitator is crucial here.

- The table doesn't know this final conversation is coming because you haven't announced it at the beginning. But *you* know it's coming, and you know it will start with a person on their left or their right. You can choose the direction.

Please approach this moment with empathy, patience, and presence. You set the emotional tone. Speak gently and model appreciation with sincerity. If needed, reassure your group that:

- They don't need to say something profound – just honest.
- It can be something they noticed in the conversation: a story shared, a smile, a quiet strength.
- This is not about performance; it's about connection.
- They will follow your lead. Be as genuine and vulnerable as you can in this step.
- It's possible that a person on your right has touched you deeply during the dinner. You might not feel the deep connection to the person on your left. You might be able to deliver a more genuine, deeply felt, and robust response to the person on your right. You determine the direction.
- Be sensitive to the dynamics of a parent/child relationship. A teenager might feel awkward giving appreciation to a parent. While there are no hard rules for this, we rely on your wisdom to manage it.

Facilitator ends the guided questioning

After the last person has shared their appreciation, take a brief pause. Then, say something like:

- Thank you all for showing up.
- I hope you leave here feeling a little more connected, a little more seen, and a little more hopeful.
- Let's carry this spirit into our everyday lives – by asking more questions, listening more openly, and appreciating the people around us more often. Thank you for being part of this.”

Feedback is important. Ask them to complete the survey before they leave.

Closing the Experience

These gatherings only work because people are brave enough to show up and speak from the heart. If your event includes multiple tables, the host can guide a short debrief with the full group, inviting reflections, insights, or key takeaways from the evening. If your table finishes early, you are welcome to begin that discussion informally at your table to keep the energy flowing and avoid any awkward silence.

We hope that serving as a facilitator is not only meaningful in this moment but also rewarding in your own life. The skills of listening generously, holding space, and inviting others to be seen are needed far beyond the dinner table. Thank you for being part of this work.



Themes and Scripts

You will need to put together a script of questions for your gathering. These scripts are the secret sauce and provide everything you need once you sit down to dinner. *Make sure the questions are suitable for the ages at your table – use your discretion.*

Every dinner must include:

1. Opening Prompt:

To begin: Honor a generational ancestor. Think of a person who is no longer alive who has had a powerful positive impact on your life. Take a couple minutes to tell us about this person and share the impact they had on your life.

2. Closing Appreciation:

This begins with the facilitator turning to the person on their left (or right) and telling them something they admire or respect about them. They might be a person they met that night, so they highlight something they heard them express during their time together. This will start a chain reaction that continues around the table, each person in turn admiring someone sitting on their left, until everyone has been appreciated.

3. Core Questions:

Put together a script from the following themes and questions or come up with questions on your own. In addition to the opening and closing prompts, it is recommended to have 6–7 questions in between. Cross-over themes / mix & match.

- Good to include at least one question that addresses the generations: What generation are you? Share with the table one misconception or stereotype you think people have about your generation.
- Have facilitators introduce the questions in their own words the best they can – try not to read directly from script.

The following scripts were developed and made available by the founders of *Generations Over Dinner* (www.generationsoverdinner.com) – open source, and free to use. *Prompts with asterisks have proved successful in our dinners.*

THEME: Purpose

Wisdom and Vitality

- Without over-thinking, answer these questions. I'm too old to ____ I'm too young to ____.
- What makes you feel most alive?*
- What has been your greatest failure? What have you learned from that experience?
- What has been your greatest achievement, or what about yourself are you most proud of?
- Tell the table a piece of wisdom you wish you could have told a younger version of yourself.

Work and Meaning

- The CDC reports that only 1 out of 3 people have a clear reason to get up in the morning. What makes you jump out of bed in the morning? If you don't have an obvious example, what do you think would make you jump out of bed in the morning? (Source: Richard Leider)**
- Do you love what you do for work? If so, what about your work that gives you a sense of purpose? If not, what manner of work would give your life more meaning?
- Studies show that having a core purpose in your life adds seven years to your expected life span. Our purpose is often related to a natural gift or talent we have always had within us. Do you think you have a gift? Share your thoughts with the table.**
- What do you want to be remembered for?

Money

- What does success mean to you?
- If you didn't need to make money, what would you do?
- How do you feel your family's relationship with money has impacted you?
- What opportunities do you think were denied to you because of gender, race, family connections and/or life experience? What opportunities were available to you because of gender, race, family connections and/or life experience?
- What lessons have you learned about money and success that you would want to impart to future generations?

THEME: The Future

Problems and Solutions

- What has been the greatest technological or social innovation during your lifetime? Focus on an innovation that has had the most impact on you personally and tell the table how it has changed your life.*
- What do you think is the greatest problem/crisis we face as humans? When you think about this problem how does that make you feel?
- What is the belief system or piece of wisdom you most wish to impart to future generations? Asked another way: what is one thing that gives you hope for the Future.
- If you have time left at your table, consider this: you are waking up in the year 2122. What has changed?

Our Planet

- How would you describe your relationship with the planet? Tell us about an experience in the past 5 years that gave you a deeper feeling of connection with nature.*
- Fifteen years from now, how will your life have fundamentally been altered due to climate change?
- Is there a generational difference with respect to how we're seeing and addressing climate change? Does this encourage or frustrate you? How might we unite in more effective ways?
- How could we learn to become great ancestors?

End of Life

- Unless we somehow solve this pesky thing called death, we will all face it in the future. Do you have a bucket list? What is something you feel you must complete or experience before you die?
- Are you afraid of death? What about it scares you?*
- If you could design your own funeral, what would it look like?
- What do you want to be remembered for?

THEME: Love and Relationships

Family (Note: this conversation could be challenging if there are members of the same family present.)

- The part of my parents I am most afraid of becoming is _____.
What about this scares you?*
- What is the best piece of advice one or both of your parents have given you?
- Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most difficult? Why?
- What personal characteristics do you possess that you would like to see continue in your family line?

Love

- Have you ever fallen in love? If so, share a defining love story. If not, tell the table what you think the experience will feel like, and what it might change in your life.
- Have you ever fallen out of love? What did you learn about yourself in that experience?
- Do you think your idea of what love is and looks like changes as you age?*

Friendship

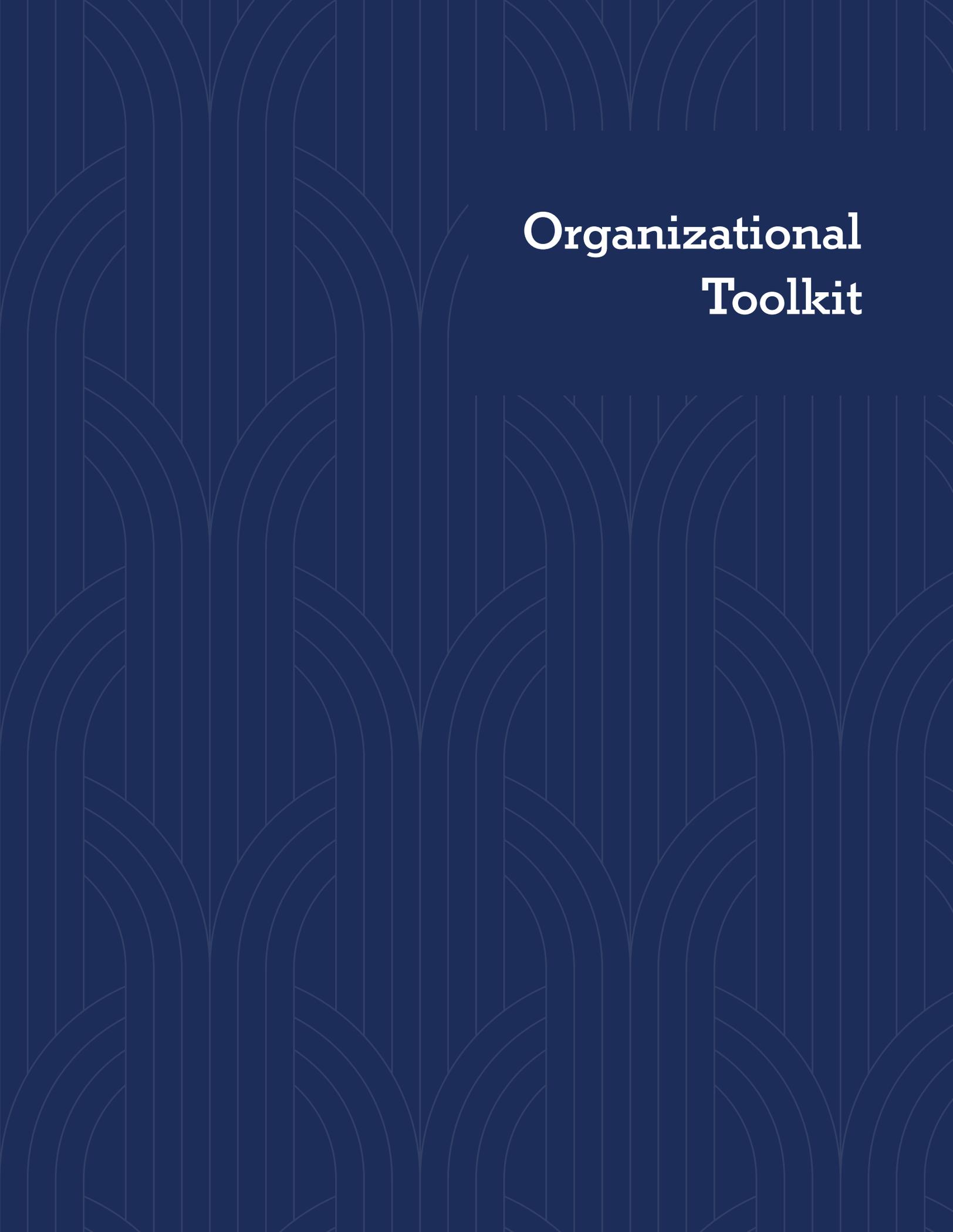
- Do you have friends that are 10 or even 20–30 years older or younger than you? If so, what gifts do you think they bring to your life? If not, what do you think prevents you from having older or younger friends?
- Have you ever had a friend break-up, what was that experience like for you, and what did you learn from it?*
- Have you ever had a mentor? Have you ever been a mentor to someone? How did this experience change your life? What do you think about the idea that some mentors can be younger than you?
- What has been your most meaningful relationship with an animal? Tell the table about this specific animal and what made/makes them special to you.

Extra Questions to Consider

- Many folks who live well into their 70s and beyond talk about caring less about what others think. Do you spend a lot of time thinking about what others think? Would you like to have more freedom around this?
- What food is your favorite guilty pleasure?*
- If you are on the older side of the table, what do you do to keep your body active? If you are younger, what sport or activity would you like to be able to do until you are 100 years old?
- What adult responsibility have you struggled with or think you will struggle with most? Examples: being a parent, finding meaningful employment, finding love.
- Think back to your childhood, do you remember what you wanted to be when you grew up?*
- Tell the table about the best job and/or worst job. If you are still in school, tell the table about the worst class and best class you have ever taken.*
- People tend to shed some of their anxieties as they get older. As you have gotten older how have your anxieties changed? Are there things you don't worry about anymore that used to trouble you? What still keeps you up at night? What makes you anxious?

You have many options. Feel free to craft your own themes & questions – keeping in mind the ages in attendance.





Organizational Toolkit

Organizing a Dinner

Table(s) of 6–8 people, round or rectangular *In our experience, larger tables (more than 8) make it harder for everyone to share, which can impact the success of the closing appreciation.

Set-Up Example

ROOM CONFIGURATION:

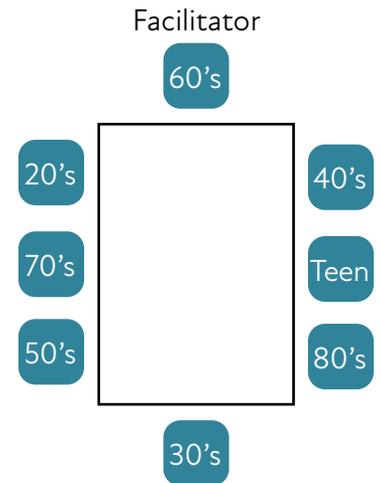
Table(s) of 8 Arranged in mixed ages/genders

MEAL: *Very important that everyone stays seated throughout the dinner. Disruptions of getting up for buffet or drinks takes away from everyone hearing each other's answers, in turn, making the closing appreciation harder.*

- Salad – pre-set on each on table or family style bowl
- Rolls – served in basket with cloth
- Butter – served in dish
- Entrée – Family style
- Dessert – to be cut at the table or plated by volunteers
- Sparkling apple cider or sparkling lemonade pre-set on table
- Water pre-set (refill pitchers set-up on side table)

TABLE SET-UP:

- Tablecloth
- Butter Dish
- Salad Dressing Dish
- Breadbasket with cloth
- Salt & Pepper Shakers
- Centerpiece (Fresh Flowers)
- Entrée Serving Bowls
- Dinner Plates
- Dessert Plates
- Salad Bowls
- Forks / Knives / Dessert Spoons or Forks
- Serving Spoons (entrée)
- Serving Tongs (for salad and/or bread)
- Napkins
- Name Cards (Handwritten – Double-sided)
- Expectations for Presence Handout (2-sided)**
- Surveys for facilitators to administer at end**



Optional Takeaway
Gift for Participants
(Notebook with
Sticker Decal & Pen)





Salad Pre-Set in Family Style



Salad Pre-Set for each participant



Holiday Theme: Disposable Plates/Silverware, Water Glasses, Champagne Flutes



Melamine Plates, Vintage Silverware

Cost Considerations

Main Points to Consider

The meal can be made in-house, catered, or potluck. The more attention to detail, to make it special and thoughtful, the better. You can bring out grandmother's china, light candles, use vintage salt and pepper shakers, and/or offer wine and non-alcoholic beverages. Turn an office space or community center into the family dining room! Intentional atmosphere enhances the experience. Incorporate as many personal touches as you can.

- No more than 8 people per table
- To stay in the moment, food should be served or brought to the table family-style. (No buffet lines.)

Cost-Saving Strategies

Food:

- Partner with local restaurants for donated/discounted meals
- Organize as potluck with sign-up coordination
- Keep menu simple: soup and bread, pasta dishes, or sandwich platters
- Ask participants to contribute \$10–20 toward meal costs

Supplies:

- Borrow dishes, glasses, and linens from community organizations
- Ask participants to bring their own water bottles
- Use simple decorations: mason jars with flowers, candles
- Print double-sided handouts and use digital surveys when possible

Venue:

- Partner with libraries, community centers, or faith organizations
- Use workplace conference rooms or dining areas
- Host in someone's home
- Look for venues that include tables, chairs, and basic kitchen access

Communications

These are the communications we've used for our events. We are happy for you to adapt the examples below for your use.

Example Invitation Email:

Hello Lianna,

We are thrilled to invite you to a special event, Generations Over Dinner, on October 28, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. At this event, tables will be thoughtfully curated to represent at least 3–5 generations. This intentional mix breaks down generational barriers by bringing together people of all ages for a meaningful, guided conversation, ensuring that every participant is seen, heard, and appreciated.

Generations Over Dinner is built on the power of shared stories and diverse perspectives. This is a unique opportunity to engage with individuals from different generations, sparking conversations that foster deeper understanding and social connection. By attending, you will help bridge generational divides and contribute to a more inclusive, connected community.

Event Details:

- Date: October 28, 2024
- Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
- Location: 155 Concord Plaza, Suite 301, 78216
- No preparation required. Come as you are.

The SALSA Social Connectedness Workgroup is dedicated to ensuring that older adults have access to diverse social, educational, volunteer, and training opportunities. Across the country, organizations are using Generations Over Dinner events to strengthen relationships with their communities.

We hope you can join us for this enriching and transformative experience. We encourage pairs of parents & children | grandparents & grandchildren to sign-up (ages 15 and up). Please share this with friends, colleagues, and family!

Please [RSVP using this link provided](#) to secure your place at the table.

Space is limited.

RSVP for one of 21 spots:

- Greatest Generation (1901–1927)
- Silent Generation (1928–1945)
- Baby Boomers (1946–1964)
- Gen X (1965–1980)
- Millennials – Gen Y (1981–1996)
- Gen Z (1997–2012)
- Gen Alpha (2013–2024) Ages 12+

RSVP/Registration by email, Eventbrite, or JotForm

Make sure to collect this information:

Name, Email, Phone, Dietary Restrictions,
Generation
Optional: Year of Birth

If your generation is already full – we will add you to our waitlist.

Example Confirmation After Registration

Subject: Confirmation for Generations Over Dinner

Hi Brenda,

We're excited to have you join us for Generations Over Dinner on Monday, October 28. We invite you to watch this [two-minute video](#) to get a preview of what a Generations Over Dinner event is like.

You will receive another email as a reminder prior to the dinner.

Event Details

- Location: San Antonio Area Foundation, 155 Concord Plaza, #301, 78216
- Time: 6:00–8:00 PM

If your schedule changes, kindly let us know as soon as possible. We have a limited number of places at the table, and one of those spaces is reserved for you. We are looking forward to being with you at this intergenerational event.

Example Reminder (more instructions of where to go/park)

Subject: Generations Over Dinner Reminder

Hi Emma,

We are so excited to confirm your place at the table for **Generations Over Dinner** on **October 28**, from **6–8 PM**. This intergenerational event is an important first step toward healing the social isolation that exists in our culture today, and we're thrilled to have you join us.

We will be meeting at the **San Antonio Area Foundation** office located at **155 Concord Plaza Drive, San Antonio, TX 78216**. There is ample parking available in front of the building. Once you arrive, head to the **main lobby** and take the elevator to the **4th floor**. As you step off the elevator, our meeting space will be immediately to your left.

If you have any questions leading up to the event, please don't hesitate to reach out. We look forward to meaningful conversations and connections at this special gathering.

Planning Checklist

8 Weeks Before:

- Set date, time, location
- Determine number of tables needed
- Identify facilitator(s)
- Plan menu (simple: bread, salad, entrée, dessert)
- Create registration system (Eventbrite, JotForm)

4 Weeks Before:

- Send invitations with generational balance in mind
- Confirm facilitator(s) and recruit volunteers
- Order food and supplies
- Prepare handouts

1 Week Before:

- Send reminder emails with location details
- Prepare facilitator scripts and materials
- Create seating charts with generational mix
- Handwrite placecards

Day Of:

- Arrive 2 hours early for setup
- Set tables with place settings and materials
- Brief facilitator(s) and volunteers
- Buy fresh flowers for centerpieces

Participant Recruitment & Balance

Target Mix per 8-person table:

- At least 3 different generations represented
- Gender balance when possible
- Mix of familiar and unfamiliar participants
- Consider including family pairs (parent/adult child, grandparent/grandchild)

Recruitment Strategies:

- Partner with multi-generational organizations
- Reach out through schools, senior centers, faith communities
- Use social media across different platforms
- Word-of-mouth through early adopters
- Workplace lunch-and-learns to recruit corporate tables

Handouts

- Post-Dinner Survey
- Expectations of Presence
+ Overview & Generations
(2-sided - to share at each place setting)

Digital Handouts & Planning Guide: saafdn.org/generations

GENERATIONS over dinner

1. What did you think of this event?

Excellent Good Fair Poor Not sure

2. Which of these statements is true for you? At this event . . .

- I made a meaningful connection with someone I didn't know.
- I was challenged by a new perspective.
- I feel motivated to bridge across differences in San Antonio.
- I am inspired to take specific action toward building a healthy community.
- None of these is true for me.

3. Do you think events such as this one can have an impact on our community?

Significant impact Some impact Minimal or no impact Not sure

4. What is your generation?

Greatest Silent Boomer Gen X Gen Y Gen Z Gen Alpha

5. Would you like to host a dinner at your home or organization?

Yes No Not sure, contact me

6. Would you like to help facilitate a dinner in the future? Attend one of our trainings?

Yes No Not sure, contact me

7. Comments: _____

8. Name (optional) _____

Thank you for your valuable input.
Please leave this survey at your table or give it to a facilitator as you leave.

EXPECTATIONS OF PRESENCE

BE FULLY PRESENT, EXTENDING AND PRESUMING WELCOME.

Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday and things to do tomorrow. Welcome others into this space and presume you are welcome as well.

LISTEN GENEROUSLY.

Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. As Quaker Douglas Steere writes, “To listen another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest gift we can offer to another.”

WE COME AS EQUALS.

We don’t have the same gifts, limits or experiences, but no person’s gifts, limits or experiences are more or less important than another’s.

IT IS NEVER “SHARE OR DIE.”

You will be invited to share stories in pairs and in a large group. The invitation is exactly that. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate.

NO FIXING.

We are not here to set someone else straight, right a wrong, or provide therapy. We are here to extend generosity and hospitality through the stories we share and hear.

SUSPEND JUDGMENT.

Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to another person, and to ourselves, more fully.

TURN TO WONDER.

If you find yourself becoming judgmental or cynical, try turning to wonder: “I wonder why she shared that story or made those choices?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”

EMBRACE CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT.

Welcome diverse perspectives and seek to understand and learn what’s at stake for the other person. Because we are not all alike, it is only through listening with curiosity and without judgment that together we can construct an alternative perspective that embraces what’s at stake for all.

REPAIR.

Acknowledge that supremacies are being expressed through habits in our bodies and voices that can be replaced with new habits like humility, resilience, and collective healing.

GENERATIONS
over dinner

GENERATIONS over dinner

Generations Over Dinner is an initiative designed to foster intergenerational connections by encouraging meaningful conversations between people from different age groups.

The concept revolves around gathering individuals from multiple generations around a dinner table to discuss various topics, often focusing on life lessons, wisdom, and shared experiences.

The aim is to bridge generational gaps, reduce age-related stereotypes, and create spaces for people to learn from each other's life experiences. These dinners often serve as platforms for passing down wisdom, discussing current societal issues, and reflecting on personal values, creating a sense of shared understanding and connection between younger and older generations.

The Generations

The Greatest Generation — Born 1901–1924

The Silent Generation — Born 1925–1945

Baby Boomers — Born 1946–1964

Generation X — Born 1965–1980

Millennials (Generation Y) — Born 1981–1996

Generation Z — Born 1997–2012

Gen Alpha — Born 2013–2024

Generations Over Dinner - Participant Tracker (Example for One Table)

Name	Age (ish)	Generation	Organization / Community Member	Email	Phone	Dietary Restrictions	Date of Registration	Confirmation Sent
1		Silent						
2		Boomer	Facilitator					
3		Boomer						
4		X						
5		X						
6		Y						
7		Z						
8		Z						
Try to include the young (15-30) and the old (65-90+), and fill-in with middle age (30-65)								
		Volunteer						
		Volunteer						

Generations Over Dinner - Participant Tracker (Example for 2 Tables)

Name	Age (ish)	Generation	Organization / Community Member	Email	Phone	Dietary Restrictions	Date of Registration	Confirmation Sent
1		Silent						
2		Silent						
3		Boomer	Facilitator					
4		Boomer						
5		Boomer						
6		Boomer						
7		X						
8		X						
9		X						
10		Y	Facilitator					
11		Y						
12		Y						
13		Z						
14		Z						
15		Z						
16		Z						
		Volunteer						
		Volunteer						



San Antonio Area Foundation

Generations Over Dinner Initiative
saafdn.org/generations

**SALSA (Successfully Aging
& Living in San Antonio)**
saafdn.org/salsa

San Antonio Area Foundation
saafdn.org

Contact
salsa@saafdn.org

Our Mission

The San Antonio Area Foundation serves as your most trusted and impactful philanthropic partner.

Our Vision

To close opportunity gaps for the people who need it the most.