



Gathering around the campfire

Staying together

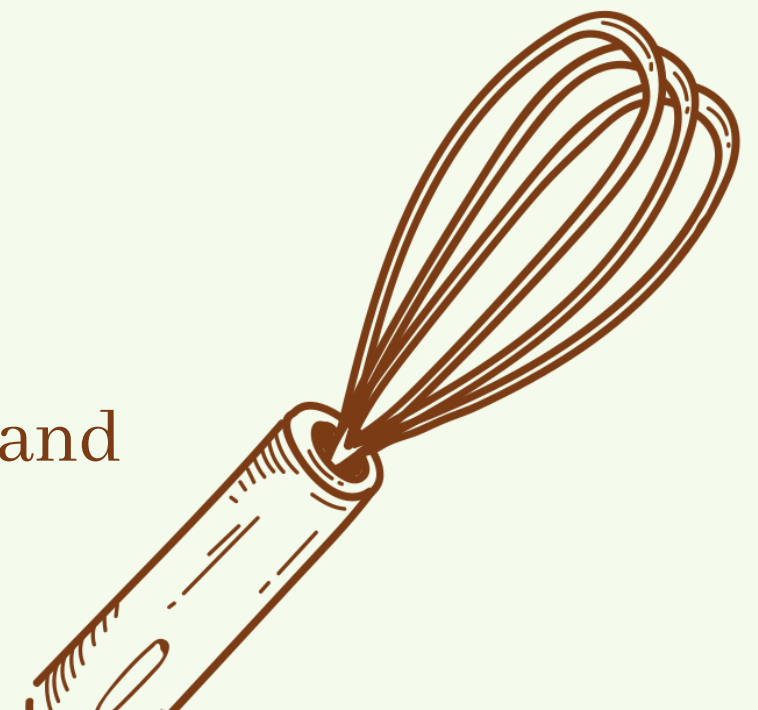
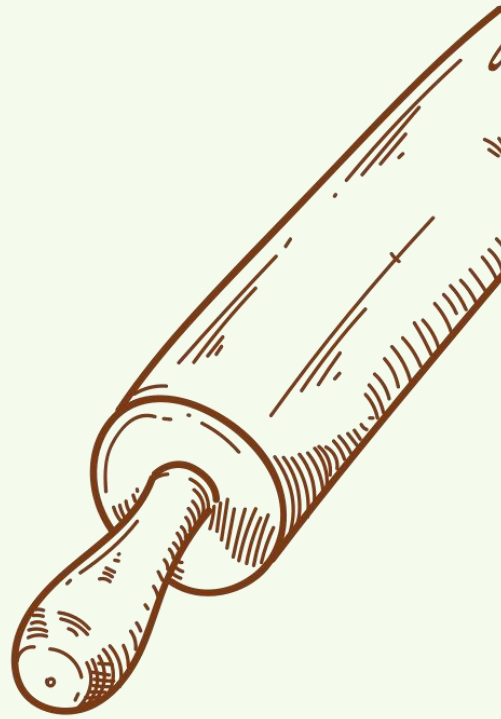


Gathering around a campfire: Staying together

From ancient times travellers would light a campfire at the end of the day, sit down, eat together, and sing a few songs. This was filling a human need not just for warmth and safety but also for company and for putting aside the day's troubles. In today's times, when teams may be scattered by remote working, it is still important to fill this need. There are many ways to do this, from a simple phone conversation to an elaborate staff retreat. Faced with lockdowns during the pandemic, we at IDI felt an even greater need to gather together and stay together. We stayed together by gathering around our virtual campfire to cook, to share stories, to listen to music and to work out. Here are a few things that we have learned.

Who to invite?

Invite everyone! A campfire is an open space. It is nice for people from different roles and different levels of the team to connect over something other than work.



Tips to consider when setting up the campfire

- **Have a host** - Online meetings will never work quite like face-to-face meetings, so each one needs a host who can act as facilitator and give everyone a chance to speak and be heard. If it is a regular event, consider rotating the hosting role.
- **Be Inclusive** – This means catering to everyone's skill level. When we cook together, we make simple recipes that everyone can follow. When we work out together, those who feel shy can turn their camera off. And when we read together, we stick with readings that do not require a deep subject matter knowledge. It is not a competition to see who is the most fit or who is the best cook. The focus is on being together.
- **Keep it fun** – In the workout club one of the most popular leaders took us through a mock boxing match. It made us laugh as well as improving our fitness.
- **Allow people a chance to be themselves** – Some people may want to share how they feel at the start of the session and it is good to allow some time for this. Others prefer to sit back and stay quiet. Make space for both types of people.



- **Keep it manageable** - This means not too much homework! When we read together, we choose short stories so everyone can find the time to read. The recipes we cook focus on easily accessible ingredients. This also means keeping the interaction manageable: if you decide to cook something very complicated that can only just be accomplished in the time available, then you will need to keep strictly to a timetable. At a virtual campfire there should be time for people to share and discuss.
- **Be innovative and have an experimental mindset** – If a person does something that does not quite work or tries some technological solution that is not perfect, you are here amongst friends to support each other. Maybe it will work better next time. Long ago, people did not have the skills to produce fire but they learned, and we will also learn in this new environment.
- **People may come to the campfire at different times** – Coming together around a campfire doesn't have to be a synchronous activity. At IDI we have used an 'exercise challenge' where staff are asked to reflect upon the day's exertions; this has given those who are early or late to the campfire an opportunity to share stories and pictures.



At the end of the campfire, put the fire safely out and say goodnight to everyone until the next time.

Unlike a real campfire there is no work required to make the site safe!

Examples: IDI Clubs

The purpose of these clubs is to connect, share, learn and laugh together.

- **Cooking together.** The primary focus is to cook together and have fun. We meet once a month and one person leads the recipe, the others follow along while chopping, frying, seasoning and baking. At the end of an hour session, a delicious meal, dessert or drink is ready to be enjoyed.
- **Reading together.** Twice a month we pick a person who will share a short story with the group from her or his country. Everyone reads the story and is ready to provide insights and thoughts. We have travelled around world and learned about German, British, Gambian and Brazilian authors.
- **Working out together.** The sessions are 60 minutes long, during which we divide the exercises among the attendees and do a warm up, some boxing and Zumba sessions followed by a yoga and stretch session. We train from the comfort of our own living room and adjust the repetitions based on our needs!
- **Listening to music.** We meet to share music that we love.





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