

WELCOME

TO GATHERING WITH A PURPOSE

*TimeBanking enables everyone to give the most precious thing we have - one hour.
Our slice of eternity. Priceless.*

Edgar Cahn, Founder of TimeBanking

The *Gathering* – What You Gain

Timebanking exchanges build trust. They connect people together through acts of giving and receiving. These exchanges of giving and receiving may often be small and simple on the surface, but beneath the surface they can have profound impact, acting like a kind of community “magic sauce.” People who actively take part in timebanking describe again and again the surprise of experiencing this magic for the first time. Over time, it becomes more familiar, like an old friend.

The Magic of Timebanking, A Small/Big Story

Here’s just one small story about this magic sauce of timebanking and how deeply it can change one life or many. The story comes from a church leader in South Korea. For more than 15 years he and his church have sponsored and supported a timebank for elderly residents of a rural village. The elders are illiterate and poor. Their lives have been far from easy. With failing health, their needs are many – but the ongoing acts of giving and receiving between them through the timebank have joined their strengths together, and they look out for each other like members of a close-knit and caring family.

More recently, they joined to face another challenge. As the suburbs of the nearby town began to reach the village, the elders saw a growing problem of latchkey children with nowhere to go after school. Left alone, often bored or hungry, the children were causing mischief. The elders might have complained or got angry– but they did something else. They expanded their giving/receiving circle and reached out. They invited the children to the senior day center where there was shelter, food and activities.

Soon, new patterns of giving and receiving began to flourish. The children started teaching the elders to read. The elders began accompanying the children to and from school. Strong friendships that spanned the generations began growing. The reverend watched as the elders and young people bonded: “Where I used to worry for these elderly residents, I have come to see that, no, their lives are full of possibility. I used to see a world half empty. Now I see it half full. It has changed how I see things,” he says.

What Can the *Gathering* Do for Me/ for Us?

So often, we have found, people fall immediately in love with the vision of timebanking. But when they start doing it for the first time, they quickly discover that it is not quite like anything else they have done. It is not quite earning and spending as we do that in the working world. But neither is it quite the same as volunteering -- though it's close. Nor is it the give and take that can be quite natural in a family setting.

Timebanking is somewhere in the middle of all these things. If you are new to timebanking that can feel odd, even confusing. You think it will be one thing. Or another. Or another. Instead, it can point in all these directions at once! For some people, that's no problem -- just an open invitation for creative action to achieve a purpose that would be hard to do any other way. But we have learned that for many people, the fluid middle space that timebanking occupies can be mysterious, hard to get grip on, even a bit disorienting. It takes practice to go with the flow of this middle space where timebanking lives.

Trying It Out, Small Scale and Informal

The *Gathering*, therefore, enables timebank leaders and members both new and old to experience timebanking informally and on a small scale but with real intentionality. This way, you can come to know timebanking in all its richness. Whether you are just starting out, or have been doing timebanking for a while, you will discover that with timebanking the learning never ends, and that new insights are always lurking, ready to surprise you.

Taking "time out" with the *Gathering* to experience or re-experience the basics will speed up the process of applying timebanking more effectively. You and your fellow timebank members and leaders can seek out purpose and you can dedicate yourselves to that purpose with a deep understanding of what timebanking has been designed to achieve at its best.

Three Uses for The *Gathering*:

You can use the *Gathering* as a guide for getting a handle on timebanking in any one of three main ways that we know of right now. More might emerge over time!

1. *As a newcomer to timebanking, you want a taste. No more.*

The *Gathering* workshop introduces timebanking basics and core values. It also asks you to jump in and try it out on a very limited basis -- so you will get a first feel. Then it's up to you to decide whether you want to do more. Or not.

2. *You are excited to go further and are considering taking a leadership role.*
This will be step one.

3. *You are already a member or leader of a timebank that is needing a “pick-up”*
Going back to basics, opening up a space for reflection as well as action, the *Gathering* re-inspires members of an existing timebank with new possibilities.

The Power of Basics

Long ago, the martial arts discovered that the key to mastery is mastering the basics. Get them right, inside and out, and they will become the foundation for mastery at the higher levels.

The purpose of the *Gathering* is to give insight into timebanking basics, then to start gaining skill by trying them out. At the close of the *Gathering* you have different options:

- Appreciate and celebrate the *Gathering* as a stand-alone experience.
- Form an informal “timebanking group” and continue to meet regularly. You might choose to piggy-back it onto an existing activity or program that is already working in your community.
- Do the full *Gathering* series as a team, to prepare for creating and leading a full-fledged timebank or timebanking project. For more on the whole training, contact info@timebanks.org

When to do the *Gathering*

You can do the *Gathering* at any time: before you ever begin timebanking; when you’ve been going for a while and want to reflect on that experience before reaching out for more; if you find that as leaders, you’re doing too much and you’re burning out; when you want to branch out into new possibilities. Whenever the time is right for you.

We suggest that you consider holding the *Gathering* more than once. You may consider doing it on a regular basis. Building up the numbers of people having this shared experience will benefit them, your timebank *and* your community.

Help Build a *Gathering* Community

The materials for the *Gathering* as a stand-alone are freely available. We invite you to join the *Gathering* online group at www.groups.io and share your experience there.

The *Gathering* workshop can stand alone as an introduction to timebanking, complete by itself. Run it any number of times with new or repeat participants. But you can also use it as the first step in a four-part training series for a more complete training in timebanking. The additional workshops that make up the full *Gathering* series are separately accessed. We describe them briefly at the end of this Welcome & Introduction.

The Action Guide & The *Gathering* Meeting-Map

After you have reviewed this introduction to the *Gathering*, the next step will be to review the action guide for planning and setting up your own *Gathering*. In the action guide, you will also see reference to the “*Gathering* Meeting-Map” which will cover the *Gathering* agenda. We call it a “Map” because it lays out the program that you will be doing together on one page. (So, spoiler alert a bad pun) you will all be on the same page! The meeting-maps each include five sections from introductions to closing out.

Here are the meeting-map advantages:

- You can see at a glance the whole sequence of the session;
- You and the participants can write down information onto the meeting-map as you work together;
- Group discussions are often not neat and linear. The map makes it easy for you as a group to flow back and forth between different activities, allowing you to keep track by capturing ideas and thoughts as they arise.
- If you choose the whole series (described below), the structure of the Meeting-Maps stays consistent throughout.

Important Extras for The *Gathering*

The Five Core Values of Timebanking

Edgar Cahn, the founder of modern-day timebanking, envisioned timebanking above all as a pathway to achieving social justice by calling on and also supporting the awesome capacity in community. Working with timebanking pioneers in the 1980s and 1990s and observing what made some more successful than others, he realized that timebanks did indeed thrive when they supported a powerful sense of shared community and that they did this best when there were certain values that they actively applied. Edgar took the time to reflect on and distil the values that were most effective, and in his book *No More Throw-Away People*, which he published in 2000, he spelled out four in detail. Later, he added a fifth. They are listed on the TimeBanks.org website home page: [Five Core Values](#). The *Gathering* materials’ supplement, [Supplement #1 -- Core Values](#) spells out each of the five more fully and is accompanied by a story.

Alongside the core values stands the central, “**Golden Rule**” of timebanking” which is that an hour of each person’s time and effort is always equal to an hour of someone else’s. This is what makes timebanking unique. It’s not always easy to apply, but the Golden Rule must hold true, regardless of social standing, skills, or credentials – or else it’s not true timebanking. As Edgar Cahn says, each hour that we have is truly our own “precious slice of eternity.” It is ours to fully live into and the one great equalizer.

The hour-for-an-hour rule, and the fifth value, which is the value of respect, both speak to the equalizing power of time for us as mortal beings. As a separate currency with different purposes, timebanking is designed to treasure the humanness in each of us, and to honor, recognize and reward the ways in which we help one another to build resiliency and a sense of shared humanity.

A Complementary Currency – Not a Replacement For Money

Newcomers to timebanking sometimes dream that timebanking might become a replacement for money, at least in their own lives. But the chances of that happening are small to non-existent. The systems that our societies have created using money over the past few centuries are far too numerous and powerful. They will continue to drive economic activity. Yet, the experience of hundreds of thousands of people now tells us that with the support of enough people and institutions timebanking can be a complement to money that is truly transformational for many. For stories illustrating how the experience of timebanking can reshape lives and communities and create a new sense of meaningfulness and wellbeing, go to www.timebanks.org and scroll down to click on the picture of a clock on a hand.

The Power of Storytelling – Adding Your Own Stories

It's hard to imagine life without stories! From almost the time we can stand on our wobbly new legs at the age of one, stories carry so much for us. They carry meaning, inspiration, warnings, lessons about life. Or they carry simple joy and life-enhancing laughter. We use them in our lives to discover and share, to bridge and connect the differences in the ways that we each see and listen to the world -- and to process those differences.

In the *Gathering*, we keep open a space for you and your group members to tell the story of your own experience and learning around the actions of giving and receiving that you will be taking together, and we ask you to reflect on the roles that the five core values played -- or might have played -- in that experience.

Learning -- The Great Opportunity to Succeed and/or Fail

In our daily lives, failure is something we tend to associate with feelings of anxiousness, even shame. But fear of failure – or rather, the feelings that come with failure – can stop us from trying out new things, from learning and growing. *Gathering With A Purpose* is built around the principle that taking the opportunity to succeed *and/or* fail leads to learning -- and it's the learning that matters.

At times during *Gathering With A Purpose*, you and your participants may find that exploring timebanking feels new and risky. Don't push these moments away – use them as learning and as fodder for great stories! Maybe -- as a person who has always been proudly independent -- choosing to receive help will leave you feeling strangely out of your depth. Or perhaps you will find yourself feeling awkward or vulnerable as you tell your story. But if you are experiencing some anxiousness, you can reframe that experience. Think of this as a roller-coaster moment -- about exhilaration, not fear.

One More Piece to Add, and An Invitation

So this is the end of the Welcome and Introduction to the *Gathering* as a stand-alone introduction to timebanking. There is one more piece to add: A description of the *Gathering* as the first step in a more complete training series.

But first: An invitation. Please join us in helping the *Gathering* grow and prosper in becoming a key entry point for timebanking. There are many ways to help. You might choose to provide an especially powerful story of the *Gathering's* impact. Or reach out to other new leaders. Or partner with TimeBanks USA in bringing the *Gathering* to the attention of potential funders. Or make a donation through www.timebanks.org. (If you do, please specify that your donation is designated for the *Gathering*.) Have other ideas? If so, please join the *Gathering With A Purpose* group at <https://groups.io> to share them with us and with the other members of that group.

We'll briefly now describe the additional workshops that make up the *Gathering* series.

The *Gathering* Series in Full

The *Gathering* full series starts out with the *Gathering* and adds three additional workshops: *Dreaming & Teaming*, *Connecting for Purpose*, and *What's Next?*

The format of these three extra workshops looks like the *Gathering's* format, so that if you choose to do the full series, everything will feel familiar. We do charge a fee for doing the whole series – so please do contact us at info@timebanks.org if you are interested, and we can send you more information.

If you do the whole series, you will find there are assignments built in to each workshop to be done out there in the real world! You will find that these are a key part of the learning journey. They make it real; and they anchor your learning in action. They will also call on you and your group to make plans and set up time to work on completing the assignment. Finding the time to come together to share your stories and reflections about your individual and shared experiences from doing the assignment is also

important. It will stretch out the learning journey – but it will also enrich and deepen it and make it more effective. Here are the three extra workshops, briefly described.

Dreaming & Teaming

This workshop will introduce you to doing timebanking as a team. Now that the timebanking basics are becoming old friends, tried and true, what do you want to achieve together? Can you agree to support the dream of one person in the group? Or find a consensus goal and aim for that? Your team action could support a family or an individual struggling with unexpected and powerful needs. Or you might commit to a small-group project for fun or serious purpose, like a pop-up book sale or a repair café.

Going through a guided process of designing, planning, and carrying out the action needed for your shared purpose will give you and your group members valuable experience in using timebanking's core values and the timebanking golden rule of an hour for an hour to achieve shared goals. The challenge you will face together: to use timebanking as much as you can. Your fall-back will be to use volunteers and funding if absolutely necessary. Practice with timebanking software will support the project.

Connecting for Purpose

In the ***Connecting for Purpose***, you will continue to build a sense of team. This level joins:

- individual exchanges,
- teamwork
- “value chains”

into your timebanking experience. It's a combo of networking, listening and acting for good that will help you zero in on how you might repeat or extend your earlier project or define a new one to align with your shared sense of purpose. You and your group members will also gain experience with timebanking software at the coordinator level.

What's Next

When you come to the ***What's Next*** workshop, you and your group will have had good practice in individual timebank exchanges and in joining together to create something good in your community using timebanking. Now you will be ready to decide if, when and how you want to use that experience. Will you use it to shape a new timebank or add shape to your already existing one? Or do you prefer to keep with this process of focusing on a specific area of action and team-building, at least for a while? Or you may decide that you want to enlarge your group and go through the whole sequence again with the bigger team.

With the workshops and the assignments from the previous workshops, you will have developed a strong understanding of what it takes to grow a healthy timebank together. You may decide to do the series all over again, bringing in new people. Whatever you choose together, it will be time to lay out your future goals and the path that will bring those goals to life. In the process of arriving at a clear, shared decision, you will be calling on your experience together, and your stories and reflections. You will be knowledgeable and confident about using timebanking to help your choices happen.

To Close

Whether as a stand-alone or as the introduction for the full series, the *Gathering* is our invitation to you to come together with others, grab your courage, step fully into the experience of timebanking to go where you most likely haven't gone before!

You may discover awkward moments, not-fully-knowing what's what – but in time, those will come to an end, you will begin to feel the comfort of familiarity and growing skill. In taking this on, you and your group will have gained something new and special together -- a greater feeling of trust and connection between yourselves as the members of a group that has gone through a unique experience together. And that's priceless indeed!

We wish you well as you take up this journey and look forward to hearing about your experience through the *Gathering With A Purpose* group at <http://voices.io>.

Yours Truly

The TimeBanks USA Team