



"Why do you always get defensive whenever I attack you?"

Welcome ...

Let's practice having a **new kind of conversation.**

We are ...

- Leaders, teachers, and healers
- Peacemakers, cycle-breakers, and boat-rockers
- Dreamers, visionaries, and influencers
- Working across a wide range of domains, personal and professional



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Intentions and Agreements

- We are here to learn, explore, grow, and stretch *ourselves*.
- This workshop is about the **process** of the conversation, not about the **content**.
- We come with a willingness to be uncomfortable.
- Use of chat: Please do not use the chat to debate, argue, or as a soapbox for your personal beliefs. Use it to respond to prompts that I give you and to offer kindness and support to one another on this journey.



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You're in the right place if ...

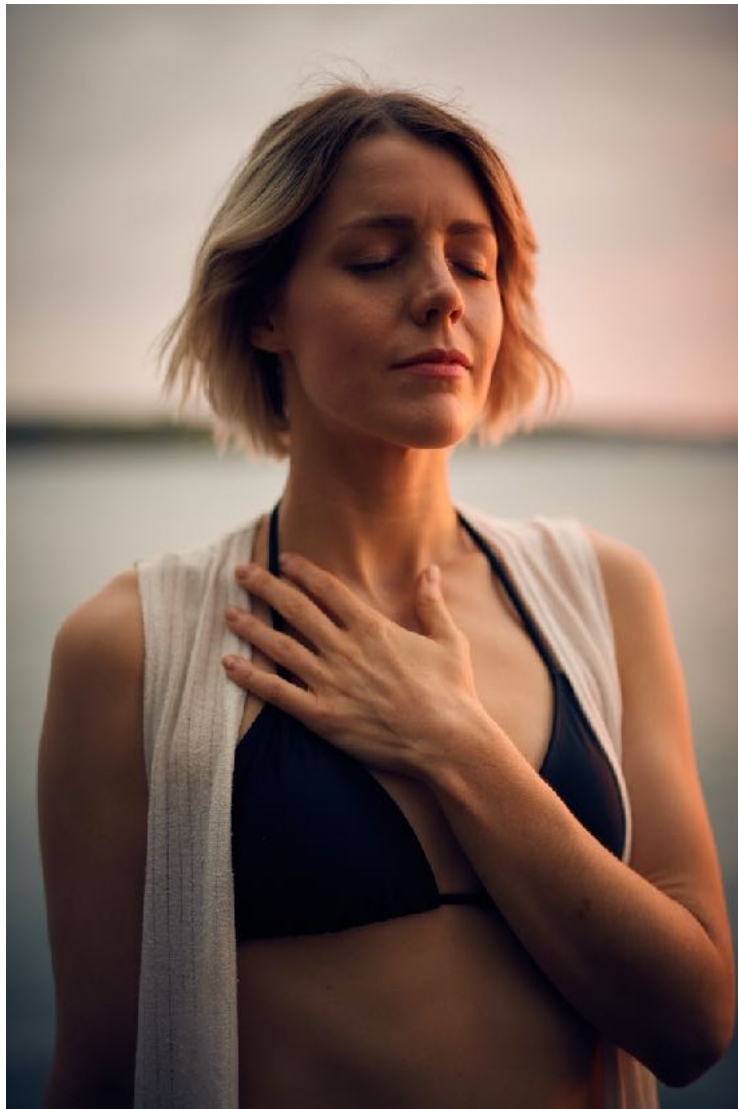


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- You want to dissolve barriers to understanding and connection.
- You want to combat cultural echo chambers that nurture conformity and extremism.
- You want to change people's hearts and minds around critical issues of our times.

Does this sound like you?

- You want to develop a greater willingness to listen to others, even when ideas feel threatening.
- You want to experience less fear of confrontation.
- You want to stay grounded in the face of strong emotions – both yours and theirs.
- You want the confidence to keep trying to connect, rather than habitually withdrawing or getting triggered.

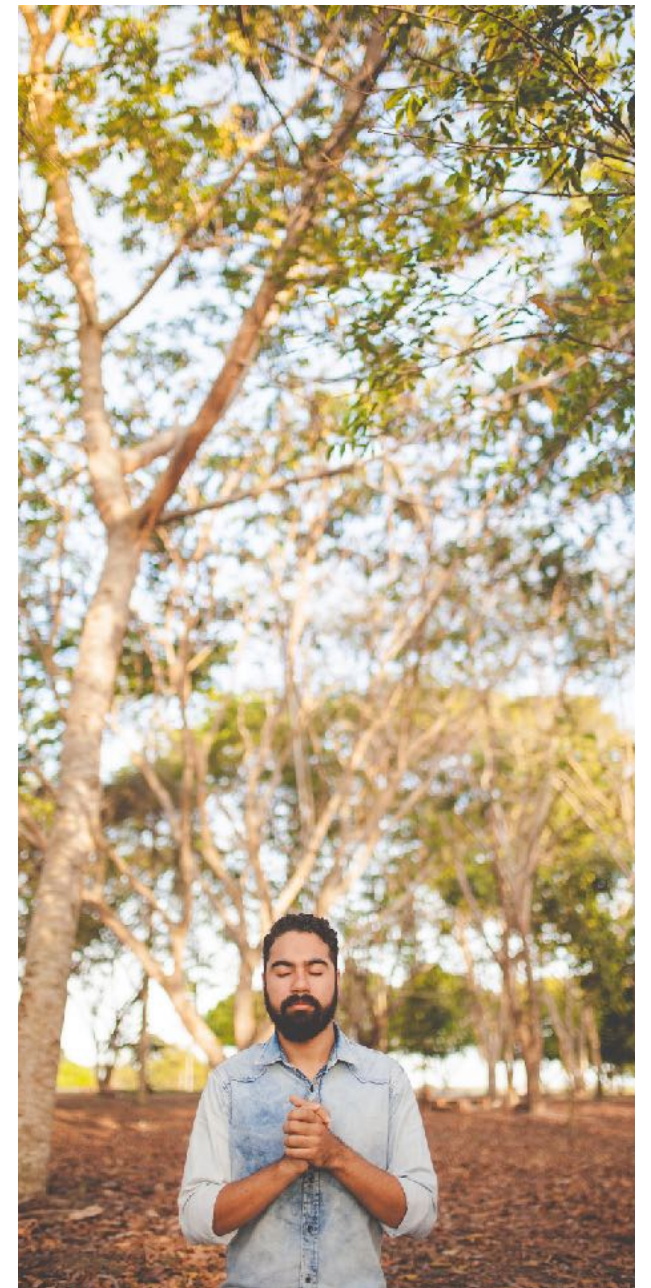


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Our Agenda



- Teaching/Information
- Experiential Exercise: Self-Expression and Empathy
- Q&A Debrief and Demo's

What you'll discover ...



- The Core Skills and Internal Shifts
- The 5 Barriers to Connection and How to Address Them
- Capacity Building: Our Inner Work
- New Scripts & Next Steps

My Journey



Relational Psychologist: Let's improve relationships with yourself, others, and the world - at home and at work.

My Work

Relational Psychologist.

Organizational Consulting.

Online Education.

Private Practice.

Educator. Facilitator.

Consultant. Coach.

Global Traveler.



Influences include ...

Terry Real's work in **Relational Living and Couple's Therapy**

Diane Hamilton's work in **Integral, Mediation and Zen**

Rebecca Colwell's work in **Integral Facilitation**

Marshall Rosenberg's work in **Nonviolent Communication**

Peter Levine's work in **Somatic Experiencing**

James Gordon's work in **Mind Body Medicine**

Diane Poole Heller's work in **Trauma and Attachment Healing**

And so much more...

Why is the vaccine convo so hard?

- ***Everyone believes they're right.*** Low intellectual humility combined with the fact that getting it right is a high-stakes matter of life and death.
- ***Confirmation Bias:*** We tend to accept information that confirms our beliefs and reject information that doesn't.
- ***Emotionally Charged:*** Many people need more Emotional Strength Training to help us not flip into fear-states.

The more passionately we argue, the more entrenched each side becomes in their stance.

Self-Reflect

- I feel **fear** when ...
- I feel **angry** when ...
- I feel **helpless** when ...
- I tend to get **self-righteous** when ...
- Enemy images and **labels** that I hold of others include ...



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Saying Hello (8 mins)

- **Introduce** yourselves and **share** your responses, *and/or*:
- What are you finding challenging about these conversations?
- Do you tend more toward fear and helplessness or anger and self-righteousness?



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There's a reason why people aren't listening.



Photo by [Dorrell Tibbs](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Drew Hays](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Paradigm Shift

The Old Conversation

What is Wrong?

You vs. Me
Win or Lose
Right or Wrong

Power-Over
Force

Deny
Dismiss
Devalue
Dehumanize



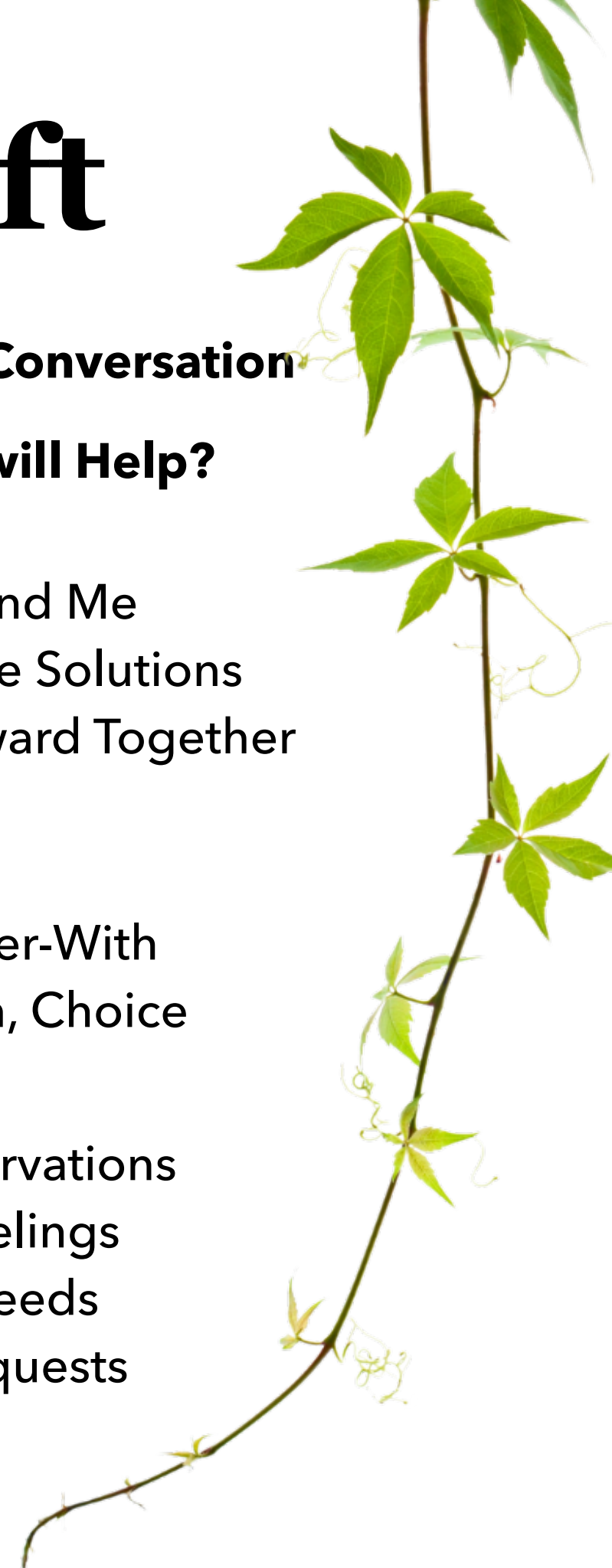
The New Conversation

What will Help?

You and Me
Co-creative Solutions
Moving Forward Together

Power-With
Vision, Choice

Observations
Feelings
Needs
Requests



Opening the Conversation

What is your deep **intention**?

How will you use your **attention**?

Who do you want to **be**?

What **skills** do you want to bring?

What's the **relational context (power)**?

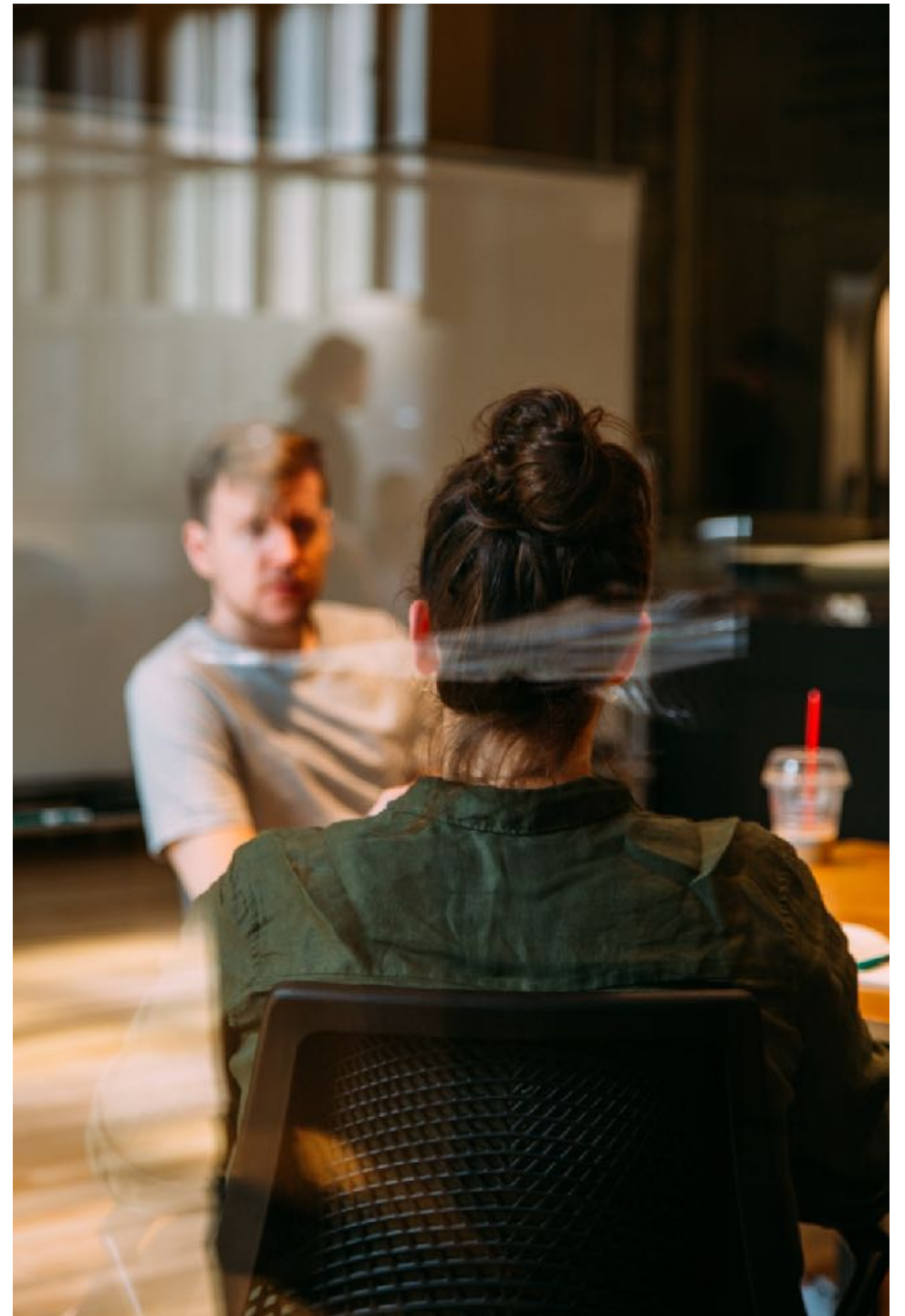


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Make your intention explicit.

"I'd like to understand ..."

"I want to find a place we can work from together ..."

"I want to find some common ground ..."

"I want to understand how you came to believe ..."

"Help me see what's important to you about ..."

"I want to have a conversation ..."

Arrive with a willingness to be mutually influenced.



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Comfort

Status Quo Bias: Humans' inherent bias to keep things the way they are and to resist change.

How do you get them to CARE?

- Bring YOURSELF. Help them see the world through your eyes.
- If you want people to examine or question something, you need to give them a reason to care.
- If you want them to "wake up" to something, you need to make the "waking up" a PLEASANT EXPERIENCE.



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Ego Protection

When you tell someone they're wrong, you stimulate their self-protection mechanisms.

If we bring criticism, superiority, and condescension, people shut down and dig in their heels to protect their sense of self.

No one wants to feel humiliated, forced, shamed, or scorned.

How do you make it safe?

- Help people save face.
- See them as unique humans, not through stereotypes and labels.
- Tell their story back to them in their words.
- Focus on feelings, needs, and wishes.



Always listen first.

The more we feel heard, seen, respected, and known, the more likely we are to listen and let in new information

Let them tell you their story.

Changing minds starts with changing how we feel.

Listen strategically.

- How do they FEEL?
- What matters to them? What are their underlying NEEDS and VALUES?
- Develop your feelings and needs literacy.

Join core values.

Don't bring data to an emotional values fight. It's not about the data; it's about what **values** people care about and about what they both **fear** and **stand for**.

- What is deeply important to this person right now?
- What are they afraid of?
- What do they care about deeply?
- What do (and don't) they trust?
- How did they come to trust (or not) XYZ?

Flip it.

"You're ignorant and stupid."

(Values: information, intelligence, and deep thinking)

"You're just a sheep."

(Values: independent thinking and individuation)

"You're a killer!"

(Values: care for life, wanting to preserve well-being and life in the community)

Find common ground.

- “It sounds like we’re both wanting a solution that creates more safety for all people – *is that true?*”
- “It seems like we both want to honor people’s choices to decide their own values and morals – *am I getting that right?*”
- “It sounds like we both want to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of our differences – *do you agree?*”

Reveal impact.

✅ "When you start speaking loudly, I get stressed and it's harder for me to listen or take anything in."

❌ "You're so disrespectful. I can't talk to you if you're going to speak like this."

Team Loyalty

Confirmation Bias: We trust information from people on “our team” and mistrust information from people on the “other” team. The moment people identify you as being on the “other” side, they automatically write off everything you might say. You lose credibility and influence.

Us vs. Them: We create in-groups and out-groups and end up isolated in echo chambers, dehumanizing “others.”



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Widen the team.

- Expand your sense of “membership” to include other viewpoints and keep your own “team loyalty” in check. How can you widen your own bubble?
- Practice telling the story from the opposite side’s point of view, understanding their team’s story and experience.
- Redraw team lines to put you both on the same team. How are you each different from the stereotypes of your teams? (*shared identity factors, shared hardships, shared interests*)
- Find a shared nonhuman enemy (*ignorance, poverty, prejudice, classism, economic systems, inequality, propaganda, deception, etc.*)

Ask questions.

Get to know the team story.

- How long have you held this position? How long have you identified with this group of people?
- What is it that draws you to this community/group/position?
- What your sense of how the outside world views this group/position?
- What do you wish people understood better about your group/position?
- Are there any parts of the group/position you disagree with or ways you feel like it doesn't accurately represent you?

Misinformation

- Educate without belittling.
- Empathize with the underlying fears and other emotions.
- Resist the urge to “win” or “prove” something.
- Use Stories: Tell a story of how you first encountered this “fact,” the path you took to investigate it, what you discovered along the way, the shifts you went through internally, what surprised you, and how this all changed your perspective and understanding.



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Help people save face.

- “Of course you supported that decision – many of us did. But now that new information is coming out, I think it’s time for all of us to rethink our stance on this.”
- “There’s no way you could have known what [insert person/group] was doing. Who has time to do all that research with a busy schedule like yours? That’s why I knew you’d want to hear about this.”

Point out contradictions.

- Bring contradictions to the forefront and hold the dilemma together.
- Create cognitive dissonance, and then sit back and let them (or you!) shift naturally on their (or your) own terms.

"I'm confused, help me understand ..."

"On the one hand ABC ... on the other hand XYZ ... do you see my dilemma? ..."

Worldview

Left appeal to:

Compassion
Care
Sympathy
Nurturing
Rights
Justice
Equality



Right appeal to:

Loyalty
Obligation
Authority
Respect
Traditions
Social Order
Purity

Always end with a question.

- "It sounds like ... *is that true?*"
- "It seems like ... *am I getting that right?*"
- "If I am hearing you correctly ... *am I missing anything?*"
- "What concerns me about this is ... *how does that sound to you?*"
- "[Summary]... *is there anything you'd change in how I summarized that?*"

Plant Seeds / Small Asks

- What is it that this person could do, *within their worldview*, that you'd see as a step forward?
- *Would you be willing to speak to a few other people to get their input on this?*
- *Could you show me where you see our values overlapping?*

Remember

You're unlikely to get the satisfaction of hearing
"You're right."

People go home, sleep on things, wake up later and have
insights when you are not around.

But, invisible shifts happen all the time.

Reflection

- Take a moment to journal/write about **whatever is coming up for you in the moment** around the subject of vaccines.
- Where do you personally stand on vaccines?
- Get on your own soapbox for a moment and vent on paper. What should people be doing? What do you wish were easier?

Small Group Experience

- Optional, but highly encouraged
- 4 people in a group
- First task: Assign person A, B, C, D.
- Second task: Choose a timekeeper.

Small Group Experience

Stage One (3 minutes)

- Person A talks for 3 minutes about where you're at personally with the whole vaccine conversation. Where do you stand, what do you find challenging, what do you wish for, what is painful for you, what deep longings do you have around this issue?
- Person B listens deeply for "what is happening."
- Person C listens deeply for all the feelings that arise.
- Person D listens deeply for all the needs, values and longings of the person speaking.

Small Group Experience

Stage Two (3 minutes)

- Person A just listens.
- Person B (1 minute) Shares what they heard and noticed: "I heard you say ..." "I noticed you..."
- Person C (1 Minute) Shares/guesses about the feelings they sensed and guessed at.
- Person D (1 minute) Shares/guesses at the needs, values, and longings of the person speaking.

Small Group Experience

Rounds 2, 3, and 4:

Switches roles and do additional rounds until each person has had a chance to be in each position.

Each person gets 3 minutes to express what is alive for them; each person gets to practice reflecting back neutrally, listening for and naming feelings and emotions, listening for and naming needs, values, and longings.

You will have a more powerful experience if you refrain from free-form discussion.

Check-in

- Who would like to check in about the small group experience?
How was that for you?
- Learnings? Challenges? Shifts?

Keep the problem impersonal.

- From people being the problem, to the problems being the problem. Get on the same side of the table with a wide variety of strategies.
 - Tone: sensitive, sincere, authentic, cooperative.
 - Reflect what they're saying and ask open-ended questions.

Both-And Framing

- How do we honor personal freedom **and** collective well-being at the same time?
- How do we thinking critically about what we think we “know” **while also** being clear about what we believe in the meantime
- “What might a solution look like that honors **both** freedom of choice **as well as** public safety concerns? What gets in the way of our being able to implement something like that? ”

Build with “yes, and ...”

- Example: “Yes, people have a right to freedom of choice, and we also have a right to be protected from harm.”
- “Yes, I hear your desire for a collective, consistent response to this crisis, and I want it to be safe, effective, and trustworthy as well.”

Separate beliefs from knowledge, facts, or truth.

- “Given what I’ve heard about ... I’ve come to believe ...”
- “It sound like when you read about ... hear about ... you come to believe ...”
- “With all these contradictory sources of information, it’s hard to sort through what to believe ... (how do you decide...?)”

Our Inner Work



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Identity Work

Re-humanize

Growth Mindset

Emotional Strength Training

Conversational Capacity Building

Inner Resourcing

- Intention: Connection, Authenticity, and Trust
- Attitude: Empathy and Curiosity
- Attention: Feelings and Needs. *How are people feeling and what does that tell me about what matters to them?*
- Take Many Perspectives: Research and learn all sides of the issue. Take in all information first hand. *The better informed you are, the better equipped you will be to represent your position, and you may even update your own views along the way.*
- “Bite Sized” and “Baby Steps” and “Planting Seeds”

Next Steps

- What has been a new learning for you this session?
- What has been validating and reaffirming for you?

Next Steps

- Come to ***Conversations from the Heart***, our Wednesday morning drop-in Q&A call.
- Subscribe to my Weekly Newsletter, Patreon, YouTube Channel, and Facebook page.

Next Steps

- Join my **Membership**.
September's theme is *Overcoming Defensiveness*
- Take **Human 101: Building Better Relationships**, a self-paced online course with comprehensive personal-growth curriculum, including an introduction to nonviolent communication, neuroscience, emotional intelligence skills, and relationship effectiveness.

These conversations are not easy.

Dialogue is hard work.

Diplomacy is difficult.

You won't see immediate results. Keep doing it anyway.

You will make mistakes. Keep going.

Any attempt at dialogue is better than no attempt at all. (JL)

Anything worth doing, is worth doing badly. (MR)

A new kind of conversation can start with you.

Join me in taking the next courageous step.