



The Linden Leadership Collective

**5 Questions: Transform
Division into Dialogue**

Table of Contents

A Confession

Transforming Conversations, Building Community

Listening Well

Five Story Questions

Making Art: Helping the Conversation Last

A Confession

I didn't grow up learning to listen.
I grew up fist swinging—or be silent—
a painful pendulum between the two.

For a long time, I let the fists swing around me, hiding
where it felt safe. Disappearing or floating away meant
less pain.

Then it dawned on me

There were other safe places,
raising my voice,
pushing hard,

Stomping my feet,

not budging
Was where the party was at.

And were the only tools for creating change.

Some of that came from conviction.
Some from survival.
Some from watching protest—
beautiful, brave, necessary protest—
move the world forward.

And honestly, I still believe protest can be holy.
Even Jesus flipped a few tables

But he also asked a lot of questions.

Like 300 recorded.

He stayed curious.

I like to speak.

I like to be heard.

I rely on the tools I know.

But life showed me something else:
when everyone in the room wants to be heard,
Sometimes space to listen shrinks to nonexistent.

And it costs me, us.

A lot.

What I'm tripping on myself to learn:

Leave those spaces empty

Tread carefully. It's sacred ground.

I'm a pretty bad listener.

Probably on the lower end of the scale.

But I show up.

I sit my butt down.

I sweat. I practice.

Even when my stomach hurts

While I listen.

And every so often,

I stay curious

I began this project wanting to confront injustice out there, but after a long Yoda-level detour, I realized the work I needed to do was in me. Classic hero's journey. So this isn't "here's what you all need to do." It's closer to: *I don't really know how to navigate the fractures in my own relationships, but I want to learn how healing might still be possible.*

Not so we can see eye to eye—because I'm grieving the reality that we may never see things the same way on this side of heaven. And somehow, there's beauty in that. Why should our stories look identical when we ourselves aren't?

It's human to judge, to come to one another with "here we go again, another of *those...*" But I'm discovering as I can move towards and not away from the people who see the world differently. And I'm learning it is a painful and wonderful thing to be wrong about someone.

So here's to being wrong about each other. Here's to caring more about connection than correction. Here's to showing up—awkward, unsure, still willing. Here's to curiosity over certainty. Here's to keeping the door open, even when we disagree.

Transforming Conversations, Building Community

Healing feels like it happens when the stories come out and come together.

- Helen Kim, Generational Trauma Researcher & Psychologist



The ancient art of Kintsugi (金継ぎ)

The cracks, differences, disagreement, and division are the reality we live in.

The gold is conversations like these, efforts to bridge those gaps resulting in a stronger, richer, and more valuable collective—one that honors the struggles and history of all its individual parts.

Listening Well

Inspired by the wisdom of Crucial Conversations

Listening is being able to be changed by the other person.

- Alan Alda

Core Principles

Listen to understand, not to respond.

True listening means suspending your own agenda. Most people are just waiting for their turn to talk.

Make it safe, then listen.

People won't share what matters until they feel psychologically safe. Safety first, truth second.

Get curious, not furious.

When you're triggered, shift from judgment to genuine curiosity about why they see it differently.

Listen for the story behind the emotion.

Strong emotions are clues—they point to what really matters to the other person.

Listen to discover their "why," not just to counter their "what."

People don't get defensive about what you're saying—they get defensive about why they think you're saying it.

5 Story Questions

Life-Shifting Moments – “Can you share a moment or life-quake that really shook your world and made you see things differently? What’s the main lesson you still carry from it?”

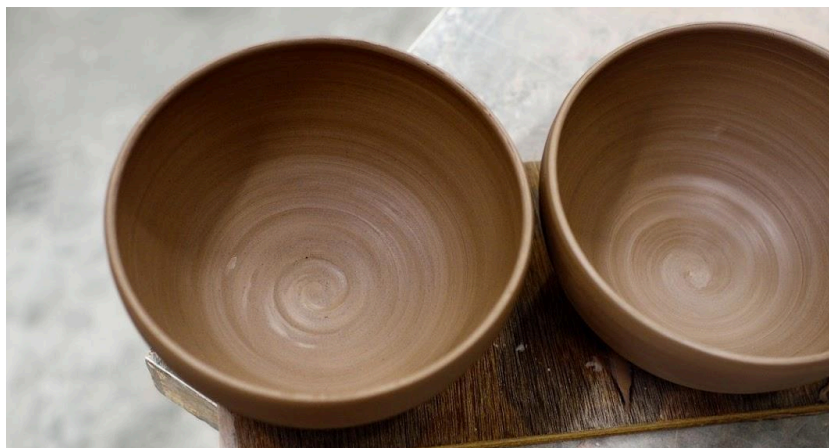
Early Life - What’s one word you would use to describe your life growing up? Why?

Where You Learned It – “Think of a person or experience that shaped one of your core values. What did they teach you?”

Crossing Paths – “Tell me about a time you connected with someone you thought was really different from you. What did that moment show you about what we all share as humans?”

Your Spark – “What’s one thing you can’t stop working on? That thing that gives you hope or excitement? Why does it matter right now?”

Your Footprint – “How do you hope people will remember the way you lived? And how does that hope influence your daily choices?”



Making the Conversation Last



The After

After listening, take a moment to process what came up. Notice what felt new, surprising, or challenging.

Capture your reflections in a video, audio recording, a song, poem, or a sketch—something that helps you make sense of the conversation and, if you want, share it as a way to connect with others.

