

# What Holds Us Together?

## Courageous Community Dialogue

I AM

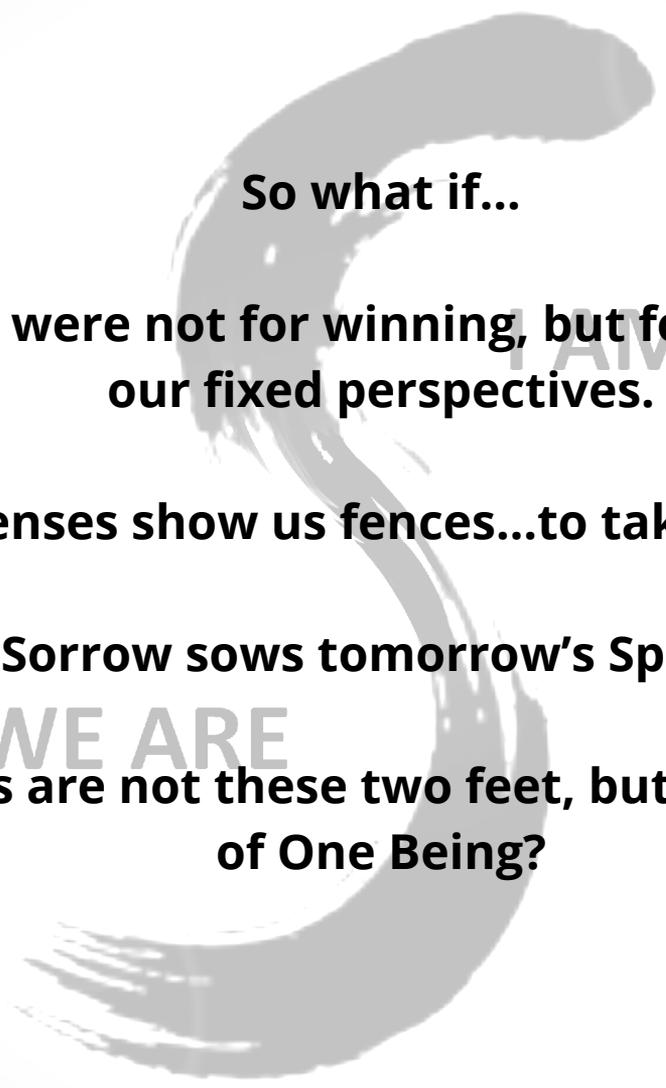
A Leadership Forum Community Lab project

**with Kathy Bittner, Poyee Chiu, Bill Hunnex,  
Lyndon Rego, & Sue Rose**

WE ARE

*with input from Steve Beck, Kate Hanisian, Steadman Harrison, John Harvey, Amanda Kennedy, Matthias Klein, Jerald Leimenstoll, Chuck Palus, & TZiPi Radonsky*





**So what if...**

**“Arguments” were not for winning, but for losing... losing  
our fixed perspectives.**

**Offenses show us fences...to take down**

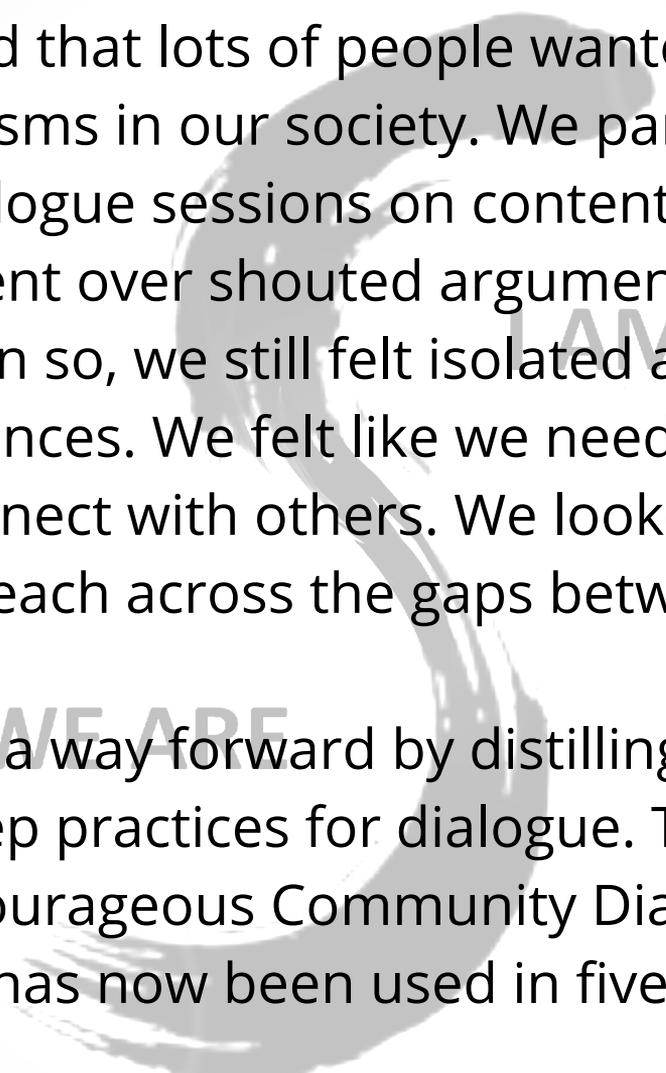
**Sorrow sows tomorrow's Spring**

**WE ARE**  
**Our steps are not these two feet, but a heartbeat  
of One Being?**

# What Holds Us Together?

Recently, some of us started talking about the growing tensions in our society. Why are so many people categorically opposed to those with different ideas or appearance? Why is this opposition so intense? As these tensions escalate, what can hold us together?

***Do you feel any of this too?***



We discovered that lots of people wanted to find ways to bridge the chasms in our society. We participated in highly structured dialogue sessions on contentious issues – a big improvement over shouted arguments and political posturing. Even so, we still felt isolated and acutely aware of our differences. We felt like we needed to find a way to re-connect with others. We looked for a way to reach across the gaps between us.

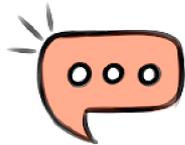
We found a way forward by distilling the essence of many deep practices for dialogue. This synthesized approach -- Courageous Community Dialogue -- is offered here. It has now been used in five countries.

***We invite you to give it a try.***

# Courageous Community Dialogue



Offer your  
Full presence



Take turns  
sharing



Listen  
Generously

Play back what  
you heard



Rotate so  
everyone has a turn  
to speak and share



Connect the dots  
from everyone's  
sharing

Presence and attention are not an automatic response. It may be useful to start with silence or do a centering practice like focusing on the breath for a minute.

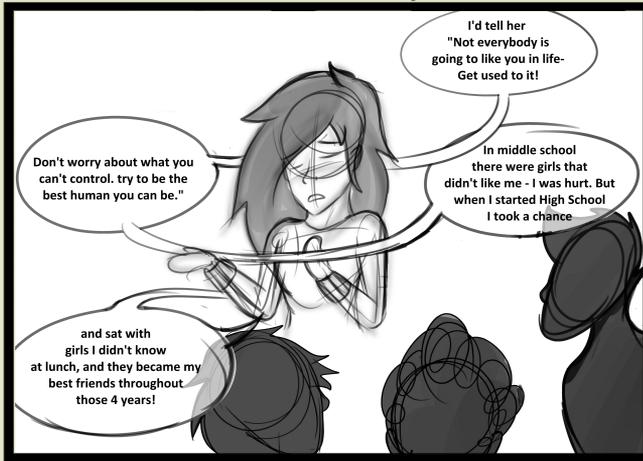
Listening is a gift we offer someone. It is an act of respect and generosity that opens the door to deeper understanding and appreciation.

We tend to want to respond to what someone says by sharing our own thoughts but here we just acknowledge what others have said. It is not about agreement, only witnessing their experience and story.

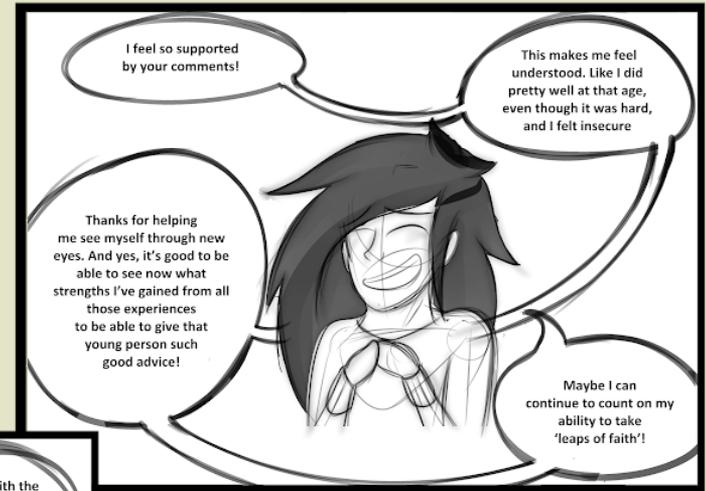
In many of the conversations we have we tend to focus on difference ("the yeah, but..."). Here we focus on what's common. This creates a sense of common ground from which we can build.

This dialogue involves two or more people. When someone speaks, we 'suspend' our tendency to give advice, fix or debate a point. We take turns speaking, offering reflective listening, and allowing the speaker to feel heard. No one interrupts. No one gives advice. No one judges the content.

Discussion Prompt: If you could talk to your 14-year-old self, what advice would you offer?



Judy  
(Speaker)



Judy  
(Speaker)



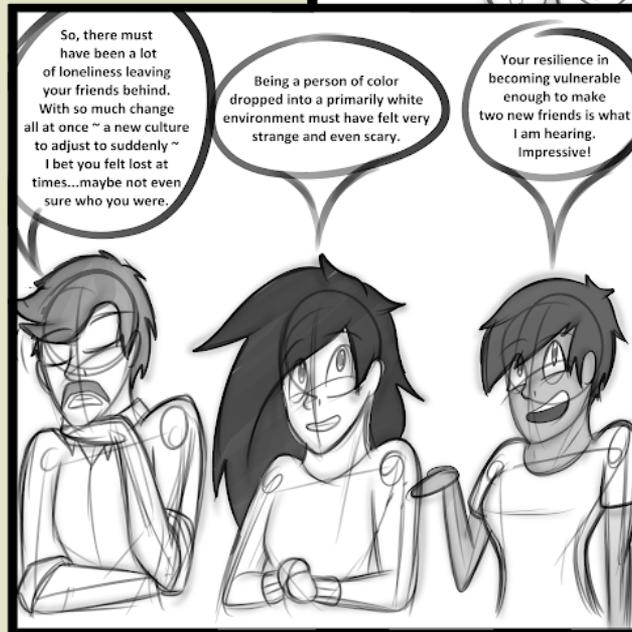
Tom  
(Listener)

Raul  
(Listener)

Jasmine  
(Listener)



Raul  
(speaker)



Tom  
(Listener)

Judy  
(Listener)

Jasmine  
(Listener)



Jasmine (Speaker)



Jasmine (Speaker)



Tom (Listener)

Raul (Listener)

Judy (Listener)

**Group Learning:** We find many things we have in common. We feel heard in a new and profound way. We validate our experiences and see how we've each struggled with hard things that became our strengths. Maybe that's part of what it takes to grow up! We also felt "seen" by each other in this process. This feels affirming.



The traditional African concept of Ubuntu is simply translated as *I Am because We Are*. It is a powerful idea. Community is common unity. And the key to creating community is communication. To find who we are together takes dialogue, courageous community dialogue.

The shift that occurs through this process is a move from simply expressing our own experiences and perspectives, which are important, to discovering -- authentically and empathetically -- what we have in common with others. A simple and obvious truth is that ***it is connection that holds us together.***

# **Dialogue Models**

## **I See You**

<https://cometta.co/i-see-you>

A creative tool for online conversations

## **Share a Time**

Share a time when you were treated differently based on who you are

## **What Would You Tell Your 14-Year-old Self**

What advice would you give your 14-year-old self?

The diversity of people is goodness abundantly expressed... We are free to be in relationship with each other, discovering an equal acceptance.

**Eugene H. Peterson**



I AM

For more information, please email  
**[comettaconnect@gmail.com](mailto:comettaconnect@gmail.com)**

WE ARE