

CIVIC CONVERSATIONS for a CIVILIZING WORLD



EDUCATION
TO LIVE WELL

Sanford Hinden

EducationToLiveWell.org

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EDUCATION
TO LIVE WELL

1. Introduction

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CIVIC CONVERSATIONS FOR A CIVILIZING WORLD

A Grandfather Sounding an Alarm

I am a grandfather.

I look at my grandchildren — and all children — and I see a culture that often trains them to compare, perform, consume, and disconnect.

I see young people seduced by substances, spectacle, and status. I see algorithms shaping identity. I see a world that quietly teaches them to measure themselves against impossible standards.

I do not believe this is neutral.

I believe much of our culture is profoundly harmful — to self-worth, to relationships, and to the natural world.

It makes people hate themselves. It encourages them to disconnect from one another in self-protection. It invites them to disregard nature in pursuit of status and consumption.

Something is not well.

And love requires honesty.

A Civic Elder Inviting Repair

Alarm alone is not enough.

We need spaces where adults can speak honestly about what we are witnessing — and what we are willing to tolerate — while expressing our values clearly and listening with respect.

We need to disagree respectfully in order to create additive solutions large enough to include us all.

This will only work if we move from pride to dignity.

Pride is ego, inflated and defensive.

Dignity is esteem rooted in character and courage.

Additive solutions require adults willing to step out of performance, soften pride into humility, and engage one another without humiliating. Civilization depends on dignity.

1. Introduction

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Civic Conversations for a Civilizing World

A Cultural Diagnosis

We are living in an age of Tribal Pride Wars.
Tribal identity becomes emotionally charged.
Emotional charge becomes attention. Attention becomes monetizable.
Monetization becomes scalable. Scalable outrage becomes profitable.
Outrage converts. Fear mobilizes. Pride rallies.
Conflict energizes donations.
Identity sells merchandise.

It is not only politics. It is business.

When ego becomes currency, compromise looks like weakness.
Listening looks like surrender.
Leaders perform outrage instead of practicing ethical courage.

This is not a conspiracy theory. It is an incentive system.
And it is distorting our civic life.

A Moral Reckoning

Societies flourish when virtue pays.
A culture endures when character has currency.
Trust. Integrity. Reliability. Ethical courage without dogmatism.
When character erodes, trust erodes.
When trust erodes, communities fragment.

The question is simple:
What would it mean to live — and raise young people —
as if dignity truly matters?
Not pride.
Not performance.
Not applause.
Dignity.

These conversations are my attempt to leave clear markings on the wall
— to say, in my time, I was awake.

Sanford “Sandy” Hinden
Founder, EducationToLiveWell.org

2. Marijuana & Young People

What's Changed? What's Real? What Helps?

A Guided Discussion for

Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

Legalization has changed the landscape.

Today's products are stronger. Access is easier. Messaging is mixed.

How do we respond with clarity — not panic, not denial?

This discussion-based session explores:

- How modern high-THC products affect the developing brain
- The difference between experimentation and dependency
- Signs of Cannabis Use Disorder
- Why young people use — anxiety, belonging, sleep, social pressure
- How to talk about marijuana without triggering shutdown or rebellion
- Skills that reduce addiction risk: emotional regulation, connection, purpose
- The role of adults in a newly commercialized cannabis culture

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue designed to:

- Increase understanding
- Strengthen communication
- Support wise decision-making
- Build healthier communities

Ideal For:

- ✓ Adult programming in libraries
- ✓ Parent groups
- ✓ Faith communities
- ✓ Civic groups
- ✓ Community centers

90
Minutes

On
Zoom

Contact: Sanford Hinden

Founder, [Education to Live Well.org](https://www.educationtolivewell.org)

50 years in community development & dialogue leadership

3. Decoupling Wealth From Worth

Reclaiming Human Value in a Status-Driven Culture

Beyond status. Beyond comparison. Beyond performance.

A Guided Discussion for

Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

We live in a culture that quietly equates money with merit.

Net worth becomes self-worth. Status becomes identity. Visibility becomes value.

What happens to dignity, relationships, and mental health
when wealth becomes the primary measure of worth?

How do we teach young people — and model for ourselves —
that human value runs deeper than income, followers, or prestige?

This discussion-based session explores:

- How wealth became a proxy for worth in modern culture
- The psychological effects of status comparison
- Social media, performance culture, and the illusion of success
- Shame, ambition, and the fear of “not enough”
- The impact on young people’s identity formation
- What true worth consists of — character, contribution, integrity
- How families and communities can model non-transactional value
- From transactional worth to relational worth

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue designed to:

- Increase self-awareness
- Reduce status anxiety
- Strengthen relational dignity
- Reclaim intrinsic human worth
- Build healthier communities

Ideal For:

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4. Sexual Commercialization Everywhere vs. The Evolutionary Value of Virtue

What Holds a Civilization Together?

A Guided Discussion for Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

Sex is everywhere in modern culture — in advertising, entertainment, social media, fashion, branding, and algorithm-driven platforms.

Sex sells. Attention monetizes. Visibility becomes value.

But what happens to dignity, restraint, intimacy, and character when sexuality becomes commercial spectacle?

Is virtue outdated — or an evolutionary necessity?

This discussion-based session explores:

- The rise of sexualized marketing in an attention economy
- How algorithms amplify arousal and visibility
- The difference between sexual expression and sexual commodification
- The psychological effects of hyper-sexualized performance culture
- Shame, status, and the signaling of desirability
- The evolutionary role of restraint, pair-bonding, and trust
- Why every civilization has valued some form of virtue
- What healthy adulthood looks like in a commercialized culture

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue designed to:

- Increase clarity without moral panic
- Distinguish freedom from commodification
- Strengthen intergenerational understanding
- Protect dignity in a spectacle-driven culture
- Reclaim character as social infrastructure

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5. The Currency of Character

What Truly Holds Value in a Changing World

What Holds a Civilization Together? And Enables It to Evolve: Character.

A Guided Discussion for

Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

In a culture driven by visibility, status, and financial success, it is easy to forget that character has always been civilization's most important currency.

Reputation. Trust. Reliability. Integrity.

These are not outdated virtues — they are social infrastructure.

When character erodes, trust erodes. When trust erodes, communities fragment.

What would it mean to live — and raise young people — as if character truly matters?

This discussion-based session explores:

- Why trust is the foundation of stable societies
- The difference between reputation and character
- How status culture reshapes moral signaling
- Shame, honor, and the regulation of social behavior
- The role of integrity in leadership and adulthood
- How families and communities transmit values across generations
- Why character functions as invisible social capital
- What it means for virtue to “pay” in modern life

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue designed to:

- Clarify core values
- Strengthen moral confidence without rigidity
- Encourage intergenerational dialogue
- Restore trust as a shared priority
- Build communities where character has currency

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6. Leading An Incomparable Life Decoupling Your Worth From Comparison Culture

Finally Making Peace With Yourself

A Guided Discussion for Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

Our culture trains people to rate, rank, and ridicule themselves
so they will buy products and services to feel better.

Now the algorithms sort and teach people to compare themselves to others
above them and ignore those below them in the classification system.

This discussion-based session explores:

What would it mean to live — and raise young people — as if we really matter?

The system teaches people to relentlessly measure against themselves

THE SELF-TORMENT TABLE OF WORTH

Wealth	Title	Things
Weight	Popularity	Travel
Height	Visibility	Entertainment
Attractiveness	Housing	Diet
Education	Care	Fitness
Work	Accessories	Relationships

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue to reclaim:

- I really matter
- I am enough
- I am worthy
- I value and appreciate myself
- I am kind to myself

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7. From Tribal Pride-War Factories To Dignity & Wellbeing For All

A Guided Discussion for

Adults, Parents, Grandparents, Educators & Community Members

Our culture is being manipulated in Ideological War Rooms with:

Marketing Machines. Merch Mavins. Money Makers. Fundraisers.

Tribal identity → emotionally charged Emotional charge → attention

Attention → monetizable Monetization → scalable Scalable outrage → profitable

That's not accidental. Outrage converts. Fear mobilizes. Pride rallies.

Conflict energizes donations. Identity sells merchandise.

It's not just politics. It's business.

This discussion-based session explores:

- Additive solutions large enough to include us all will only emerge when we move from pride to dignity — when performance gives way to presence, and when conviction is balanced by humility
- Pride has become weaponized
- Groups defend status instead of pursuing truth
- Leaders perform outrage instead of practicing ethical courage
- Compromise looks like weakness instead of maturity
- Pride says, “I must be seen as right”
- Dignity says, “I can stand in who I am without humiliating you”

This is not a lecture. It is a facilitated dialogue designed to:

- Promote the value of Dignity For All
- Strengthen appreciation for respectful disagreement
- Encourage inter-tribal dialogue
- Restore trust as a shared priority
- Build communities where respectful dialogue is valued

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About

Sandy Hinden has developed and facilitated more than 200 interactive sessions locally and online on habit improvement, meditation, meaning and purpose, wellbeing, communication, empathy, leadership, and community improvement.

Sandy's work centers on helping people connect more deeply with themselves, each other, and the larger world through kindness, wisdom, and dialogue.

He is the author of *Education To Live Well* (2025), *7 Keys to Love* (2009), and the founder of *Wisocracy.org* (2022).

His work spans five decades and continents, facilitating transformational programs for UN initiatives, Rotary-related groups, NGOs, educational institutions, and civic organizations.

He has worked as Program Director for Suffolk Community Council, a fundraiser for the Boys & Girls Club and Central Suffolk Hospital, and Executive Director for the Dix Hills Performing Arts Center.

He is the author of multiple works on personal growth, leadership transformation, and systemic reform, and a catalyst for global movements in civic education, peacebuilding, and sustainable governance.

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Community Comments

“Sanford Hinden is one of the most humane, compassionate, loving human beings I have ever met. He speaks and acts from deep wisdom about what people need — and what the world needs now. I trust him and have learned immensely from him.”

Ronald Gross, Founder/Director, Conversations New York
Co-chair, University Seminar on Innovation, Columbia University

“Thank you for moderating our weekly Conversation Circle. Each week, the conversation gets more stimulating and informative! Everyone loves the sessions and is so happy to see each other, even if it’s only virtually! Keeping our patrons connected and giving them a chance to discuss what’s on their minds is more important than ever in these challenging times.”

Roseanne Dorfman, Program Coordinator, West Hempstead Library

“Thanks so much for yet another great program!! I heard great feedback from our patrons. I just came in from a meeting and was met by my coworker, who told me that our patrons LOVED your program. The feedback we received was great, and I want to thank you for offering your programs to libraries. I'd love to welcome you back again in the future for another one of your presentations!”

Amy Mondello, Program Director, Glen Cove Library

“It was a pleasure to meet you and greet you in person. Once again, thank you for providing a great program. We all benefited from your knowledge. You managed to hold our interest from beginning to end. The role-playing really added to the experience. Several people in the audience have thanked me for this wonderful program. I hope you had fun.”

Edie Kalickstein, Program Director, Long Beach Library

“It was an excellent and detailed presentation. The pages were well outlined, with clear, precise directions. I thought the give and take was excellent, and a lot of people felt connected.”

Judith Pannullo, Executive Director, Suffolk Community Council

“This group is very unique for our community. Love interacting with strangers, sharing ideas, and pointing out programs that could benefit us all. We hear how people spend their time. We stick to common topics that affect most of us. We share common goals. I would love for this group to be more often. We all would love that.”

A Library Patron

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