

CURATED RESOURCE GUIDE

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# Community, Trust & Habits

Books, articles, and references for building belonging, steadiness, and credible communication.

[ThingsGoSideways.com/secret](https://ThingsGoSideways.com/secret)

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

# This is not a syllabus. It is a field kit.

The resources here support three practical moves that matter when organizations are under pressure: build real community, cultivate trust through behavior, and create habits that make steadiness repeatable.

Use this guide by choosing one category, one resource, and one practice to test. Do not try to read everything at once. Overloading yourself would be a little too on-the-nose for this session.

When you are communicating through uncertainty:  
Start with regulation. Reduce cognitive load. Give people one honest anchor, one clear next step, and one reliable point of return.

## Inside

- Community: belonging, loneliness, and civic connection
- Trust: leadership, institutions, content, and AI explainability
- Curiosity: questions as an operating system
- Habits: repeatable practices for attention and change
- Touch and embodied connection: the human infrastructure of belonging
- Archetypes and meaning-making: story structures that help people orient



# For building belonging that is real enough to hold people when plans break.

## Start with these books

- Tribes by Seth Godin
- Belong by Radha Agrawal
- The Art of Community: Seven Principles for Belonging by Charles H. Vogl
- This Is Where You Belong by Melody Warnick
- The Art of Gathering by Priya Parker

## Articles, reports, and useful field notes

- [A Solution for Loneliness](#) - Kasley Killam in Scientific American. A clear entry point into volunteering, social connection, and the public-health stakes of loneliness.
- [Community Can Offer a Cure to Our Technology Addictions](#) - Pacific Standard. Useful for thinking beyond “turn off your phone” toward structures that reduce social disconnection and overwork.
- [How Gen Z Is Solving America’s Crisis of Isolation](#) - Casper ter Kuile in Pacific Standard. Especially useful for understanding small-group belonging, music, meaning, and self-created rituals.
- [Campaign to End Loneliness: Threat to Health](#) - A useful hub for understanding the health effects of loneliness and social isolation.
- [Building Trust in Communities](#) - University of Minnesota Extension. Practical lens on trust, civic engagement, and community leadership.
- [BetterTogether Final Report](#) - The Saguaro Seminar at Harvard Kennedy School. Foundational social-capital reading.
- [Social trust is one of the most important measures most people have never heard of](#) - David Halpern. A behavioral-insights lens on social trust as a measurable civic force.
- [Trust Me](#) - Freakonomics Radio episode on trust in society, including interview segments with Robert Putnam.
- [Public Engagement Strategies](#) - University of Minnesota Extension resources for engaging citizens in decisions.

A useful pattern for leaders: belonging is often formed in small, repeatable groups where people can carry difficulty together. The strongest communities are not always the loudest or largest. They are the places where people can be honest without being dropped.



# Selected research on loneliness, social isolation, social connection, and health

- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T.B., Baker, M., Harris, T. & Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(2), 227-237.
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T.B. & Layton, J.B. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review. *PLoS Medicine*, 7(7), e1000316.
- Valtorta, N.K., Kanaan, M., Gilbody, S., Ronzi, S. & Hanratty, B. (2016). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for coronary heart disease and stroke. *Heart*, 102(13), 1009-1016.
- Hawkey, L.C., Thisted, R.A., Masi, C.M. & Cacioppo, J.T. (2010). Loneliness predicts increased blood pressure. *Psychology and Aging*, 25(1), 132.
- Gale, C., Westbury, L. & Cooper, C. (2018). Social isolation and loneliness as risk factors for the progression of frailty: the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing. *Age and Ageing*, 47(3), 392-397.
- Global Council on Brain Health. (2017). The brain and social connectedness: GCBH recommendations on social engagement and brain health.
- Cacioppo, J.T. & Cacioppo, S. (2014). Older adults reporting social isolation or loneliness show poorer cognitive function four years later. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 17(2), 59-60.
- O'Connell, H., Chin, A.V., Cunningham, C. & Lawlor, B.A. (2004). Recent developments: suicide in older people. *BMJ*, 329(7471), 895-899.
- Shankar, A. et al. (2017). Social isolation and loneliness: prospective associations with functional status in older adults. *Health Psychology*, 36(2), 179.
- Holt-Lunstad, J. (2017). The potential public health relevance of social isolation and loneliness. *Public Policy & Aging Report*, 27(4), 127-130.
- Cacioppo, J.T. et al. (2002). Loneliness and health: potential mechanisms. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 64(3), 407-417.
- Dreyer, K., Stevenson, A., Fisher, R. & Deeny, S.R. (2018). Association between living alone and health care utilization in older adults. *BMC Geriatrics*, 18, 269.



# For cultivating trust when people are skeptical, overloaded, or watching for the gap between words and behavior.

## Books

- [The Confidence Game](#) by Maria Konnikova
- [Who Can You Trust?](#) by Rachel Botsman
- [The Code of Trust](#) by Robin Dreeke
- [The Speed of Trust](#) by Stephen M.R. Covey
- [Extreme Trust](#) by Don Peppers and Martha Rogers

## Reports, articles, and research

- [2022 Edelman Trust Barometer](#) - Annual trust and credibility survey. Useful for seeing how skepticism shifts people toward closer circles of trust.
- [Trust in Leadership](#) - Roffey Park Institute. A practical leadership lens on trust.
- [The impact of trust in leadership on organizational transformation](#) - Global Business and Organizational Excellence, March 2020.
- [Survey: People's Trust Has Declined in Business, Media, Government, and NGOs](#) - Harvard Business Review summary of declining institutional trust.
- [The Neurobiology of Trust](#) - Research lens on oxytocin, trust, and workplace behavior.
- [Why companies need artificial intelligence explainability](#) - MIT Sloan. Useful for linking trust, opacity, decision tracing, and stakeholder confidence in AI.
- [The Role and Importance of Building Trust](#) - Penn State Extension. Community engagement and trust-building imperatives.
- [Lead Your Community With Trustworthy Content](#) - Content Marketing Institute. Useful reminder that community content should serve the audience, not center the organization.
- [Trust in Business](#) - Accenture insights on trust as a driver of loyalty and business behavior.
- [The Speed of Trust](#) - Book and related resources from Stephen M.R. Covey.
- [Dogs can recognize a bad person and there is science to prove it](#) - A lighter, memorable trust example: if you lie to your dog, they learn. Humans are not always that efficient.



## CURIOSITY AND HABITS

# For creating the repeatable behaviors that help people stay oriented instead of reactive.

### Curiosity

- Why? by Mario Livio
- A More Beautiful Question by Warren Berger
- How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci by Michael Gelb

### Practice prompt

Before deciding what to say, ask: What am I assuming about the person receiving this message, and what might their nervous system be carrying right now?

### Habits

- Atomic Habits by James Clear
- Hooked by Nir Eyal
- Essentialism by Greg McKeown
- Deep Work by Cal Newport
- Attention Pays by Neen James
- [How Communities Increase Habit Formation \(and Retain App Users\)](#) - Designli article on how community structures can support repeat behavior.

## TOUCH AND EMBODIED CONNECTION

For remembering that belonging is not only cognitive. It is physical, relational, and patterned through contact, rhythm, and co-presence.

- Dunbar, R. (2010). The social role of touch in humans and primates. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 34, 260-268.
- Field, T. (2003). *Touch*. MIT Press.
- Field, T. (2000). *Touch Therapy*. Churchill Livingstone.
- Gallace, A. & Spence, C. (2010). The science of interpersonal touch: an overview. *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 34, 246-259.
- Grewen, K.M., Girdler, S.S., Amico, J. & Light, K.C. (2005). Effects of partner support on oxytocin, cortisol, norepinephrine, and blood pressure. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 67, 531-538.
- Heinrichs, M., Baumgartner, T., Kirschbaum, C. & Ehlert, U. (2003). Social support and oxytocin interact to suppress cortisol responses to psychosocial stress. *Biological Psychiatry*, 54, 1389-1398.
- Kraus, M.W., Huang, C. & Keltner, D. (2010). Tactile communication, cooperation, and performance: an ethological study of the NBA. *Emotion*, 10(5), 745-749.
- Light, K.C., Grewen, K.M. & Amico, J.A. (2005). More frequent partner hugs and higher oxytocin levels are linked to lower blood pressure and heart rate in premenopausal women. *Biological Psychology*, 69, 5-21.



# For building narratives that help people orient without pretending uncertainty is gone.

- [Kaye Putnam's courses on archetypes and branding](#) - Useful for thinking about archetypes as a strategic language for trust, recognition, and audience alignment.
- The Hero With a Thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell

The thread through all of this:

People do not trust language because it is polished. They trust language when it reduces confusion, matches behavior, and gives them something real enough to stand on.

## A simple way to bring this back to work

- Pick one message your organization sends during uncertainty.
- Find the comforting fiction, vague promise, or cognitive overload inside it.
- Rewrite it with one honest anchor, one small next step, and one clear update rhythm.
- Before sending, regulate first. The message will carry the state of the person who writes it.

### Continue the work

Videos, handouts, and extra resources for this session:

[ThingsGoSideways.com/secret](https://ThingsGoSideways.com/secret)

[KiKi@ThingsGoSideways.com](mailto:KiKi@ThingsGoSideways.com)



## SESSION-SPECIFIC REFERENCES

# For communicating through uncertainty without overloading the receiver.

These two references connect directly to the core moves from the session: regulate first, reduce cognitive load, and communicate in a way people can actually metabolize.

### How to communicate effectively in times of uncertainty

McKinsey article outlining five fundamental tools leaders can use to communicate with teams and carry organizations through uncertain times with renewed purpose and trust.

Use this with the TGS Layer: McKinsey strengthens the sender move; receiver state tells you whether the message can land.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/how-to-communicate-effectively-in-times-of-uncertainty>

### Navy SEAL Box Breathing Technique

QuietKit guide to box breathing: inhale, hold, exhale, hold. Useful as a simple regulation practice before drafting or delivering high-stakes messages.

Before the message: breathe first. The message will carry the state of the person who writes it.

<https://quietkit.com/box-breathing/>

