

**THE PEOPLE'S SUPPER IN THE
AGE OF PHYSICAL DISTANCING:
A STORY-SHARING & LISTENING GUIDEBOOK
FOR VIRTUAL GATHERINGS**



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Dear People's Supper friends,

As if these times weren't unsettling enough, here comes coronavirus. Each passing day brings new restrictions and new fears. At a time when loneliness is already deemed a public health threat and we could really use a hug, we discover the best thing we can do for one another is social distancing and elbow bumps.

To those of you who find yourself distracted, anxious, or triggered: We see you. For the medical professionals among you, for those who are already caregiving, and those who are living with illness or a compromised immune system, for those who can't *not* go to work, for those working in service industries who are worried about your next paycheck, and those who've already lost theirs, for every small business owner for whom a few short weeks have erased years of work: We're sending an extra (virtual) squeeze.

But let's be clear: While physical connection only makes this worse, we need social connection more than ever. Research proves what many of us know from experience: In the face of disaster, our social structures are a big part of what pulls us through.*

"During a shock, what drives how we do has to do with the connections we have," says our friend Dr. Daniel Aldrich, who directs the security and resilience studies program at Northeastern. He & his team have studied what happened in the wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the Paradise Fires in California, and other disasters around the world: in Japan after the tsunami and Christchurch, New Zealand after the mass shooting in a mosque there. In case after case, they found that those who fared best were the ones not only with strong ties to family and friends — what the researchers call "bonding ties" — but with strong ties to neighbors and other community members — what the researchers called "bridging ties". Those most at-risk are always the people who are the most vulnerable to begin with: older folks who live alone, and people with disabilities, and others who lack access to information or resources.** Survival literally depends on people checking in on one another.

In the pages that follow, you'll find everything you need to gather virtually right now: suggestions on how to reach out to your community (and what to do if you're feeling alone), facilitation tips and suggested conversation-starters, guidelines for successful online gatherings, and resources for how you can help those most in need right now.

In Chinese, the words for crisis and opportunity share the same character. (Thanks Homer Simpson [for giving us the word, "crisitunity"](#).)

In every crisitunity, we're forever reminded of the words of Mr. Rogers: Look for the helpers. We're grateful that they — you — are not hard to find.

May you all stay safe and healthy, and know you're not alone.

In solidarity,

Lennon Flowers & The People's Supper Team

March 2020

* Walker, A. (2020, March 12). In a disaster that calls for isolation, your community will help you survive. *Curbed*. <https://www.curbed.com/2020/3/3/21157918/coronavirus-prepare-home-neighborhood-covid19>

** Castañón, L. (2020, March 13). What U.S. Communities Shouldn't Forget in the COVID-19 State of Emergency. *News @ Northeastern*. <https://news.northeastern.edu/2020/03/13/things-communities-shouldnt-forget-to-do-in-a-state-of-emergency/>

ABOUT US

The People's Supper uses shared meals to build trust and connection among people of different identities and perspectives. Our work is born of a belief — to quote a popular adage — that “change moves at the speed of trust”, and a simple question: **What needs healing here?**

Since January 20, 2017, we've teamed up with ordinary people, schools, faith communities and neighborhood organizations and equipped them to host over 1,500 suppers in more than 120 cities and towns across the country, in order to strengthen our individual and collective resilience, and to repair the breach in our interpersonal relationships across political, ideological, and identity differences. We've worked with the Mayor's Office in Erie, PA, on a series of racial healing suppers, and with a group of leaders in education in Los Angeles, who operate in a highly competitive and politicized environment and feared that mistrust was inhibiting their ability to learn from one another. We've worked with dozens of partners, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Righteous Persons Foundation, USC Center EDGE, Facebook, Duke Endowment, Obama Foundation, and more.

The People's Supper is housed by TDP Labs, which works to transform some of our hardest conversations and most isolating experiences into sources of community support, candid conversation, and forward movement using the age-old practice of breaking bread.

Our work began as a collaborative project led by three organizations: the Faith Matters Network, a people of color led collective working to equip 21st century faith leaders with the tools to build healthy, equitable communities; Hollaback!, a global, people-powered movement to end harassment; and The Dinner Party, a community of mostly 20- and 30-somethings out to transform our most isolating experiences into sources of meaningful connection and forward movement.



HOW TO MAKE VIDEO CHATS NOT SUCK

#realtalk: Much of our work is about using online tools to help people connect offline. We know firsthand the value of sharing a meal, and of looking someone in the eye without the filter of a screen. Video chats are notoriously susceptible to distraction: People toggle between tabs on their computer screens, or look at the news on their phones or TVs, or find other excuses to multitask. One or two voices often dominate a conversation, with the result that others tune out.*

But we've also been working on a remote team for the last six years, and have benefitted from powerful conversations and relationships with people we may not ever meet.

Good video chat etiquette can go a long way to making conversation smoother and more meaningful for everyone involved:

- 1. Encourage everyone to be on video.** When you log-in, click “call-in using internet audio.” If your microphone is not working or your connection is unsteady, try calling in on audio and muting the mic on your computer screen, so that you speak freely without worrying about bandwidth and mid-sentence freezes. (If the connection is poor, you may also want to turn off your video, but you'll still have the chance to see other people, and can read the room more easily than if you're only dialing in.)
- 2. If you have earbuds or a headphone set, use them!** This goes for hosts and participants alike. Be sure to keep your microphone close to your mouth, to maximize volume.
- 3. Encourage everyone to mute their microphone if they're not speaking and to unmute when they wish to speak.** It helps to minimize background noise, and is a great visual cue to the group when someone wishes to speak.
- 4. Encourage pauses!** “Break up conversation flow into 15-20 minute segments,” says the team at the [Center for Applied Research Solutions](#). If you're presenting information — say, opening your gathering with a talk or a meditation exercise — ask folks to use the chat box to share questions that are coming up for them, or one word they're sitting with or choosing to takeaway. When gathering in-person, most People's Supper experiences last 1.5-2.5 hours. Online conversations will likely be shorter, and that's okay. If folks are hungry to keep talking, be sure to offer a bathroom break after an hour.

* Frisch, B. And Greene, C. (2020, March 5). What It Takes to Run a Great Virtual Meeting. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2020/03/what-it-takes-to-run-a-great-virtual-meeting>

REACHING OUT

HOW TO NURTURE & SUSTAIN COMMUNITY ONLINE

Check in on your people. Invite your friends, your family, or other community members to gather online one evening. Keep in mind, you want to keep each gathering small (we recommend no more than 9-12 people). If you're part of a large network — for ex, a faith community or a school — schedule a handful of conversations, and invite folks who to sign-up for a slot.

A few tips:

Acknowledge fear & anxiety: Resist the urge to moralize. Instead, lead with your own vulnerability: Name the fears you're carrying — whether for your own physical or financial wellbeing or that of the people you love, and explain why you're hungry to connect.

Pay particular attention to the people in your life who are most at risk right now. If they're unlikely to join a video call due to lack of access or comfort with technology, make a plan to call them, and set up a calendar reminder to check-in every few weeks. (If your list is long, ask a mutual friend or family member if they'd be willing to take a shift, or to create a telephone tree.)

Reaching beyond your personal network: Much of the work of The People's Supper has focused on building trust and connection among people of different identities and perspectives, often by bringing together people who are not already in relationship. Shared crises can be a powerful moment to come together and bridge difference, and this is a rare moment in which people around the world are confronting the same challenge and experiencing many of the same fears.

Looking to gather a diverse group? Invite multiple networks. As a rule, people will only show up if they trust the person at the table or the person who invited them. Try writing down the names of five people you know with a diverse array of backgrounds and identities, who are embedded in networks outside your own. Invite them to the table. Once they're on board, encourage them to extend the invitation to friends of theirs, with careful thought to what kind of language will best speak to them. (For example, did you know that there are words that are code for "liberal" or "conservative"? The Village Square has a [terrific blog post on the subject here.](#))

WHICH PLATFORM SHOULD I USE?

Zoom: See [Cheat Sheet from Stanford IT](#) + [video tutorials on how to host or co-host a meeting](#)

Advantages: We generally find it's the highest quality video

Disadvantages: Free accounts are limited to 40 minutes for group meetings. The Pro Account, with up to 100 participants and unlimited call and videoconference times, costs \$14.99/month. It's also not always intuitive for non-digital natives.

Google Hangouts: See [Cheat Sheet](#)

Advantages: It's free, and easy to access if you have a gmail account.

Disadvantages: The quality can be shaky, and you can only see speaker-view on your phone, meaning you can't see all participants via the gallery-view.

Skype: See [instructions for Group Video Chat here](#)

Advantages: It's free! And it tends to be the most widely used and familiar platform for folks outside the US.

Disadvantages: Video quality can be shaky.

CONVENING A VIRTUAL TABLE BEFORE YOU GATHER

Close your eyes. Imagine the gathering is over, and you've just logged off. What do you want to feel in this moment? What kind of experience do you hope to have had?

Remember: The single most important thing you can do as a host is to know why you're there and what you want folks to leave with. Over the course of the evening, simply aim for that end-point. Keep in mind that just as no two stories are ever exactly alike, no two gatherings will ever be quite the same. Treat all of this as a tool and a starting point, and feel free to make it your own.



TO PREP:

- 1. Send out an invite.** (Yup, a text thread or WhatsApp message can totally work.)
- 2. Send a confirmation email to all guests,** with instructions on how to log-on, and a reminder to bring their headphones, or otherwise to be in a quiet location. *(If some folks are using the technology for the first time, encourage them to download the software and test out their equipment a day in advance.)*
- 3. Prepare well*:**
 - **Choose which platform and tools to use.**
 - **Set up your space:** Give thought to what people will see behind you, and be sure that your face is well-lit. Plug in your computer or phone so it has plenty of battery.
 - **Have a notebook beside you,** and include an outline of the flow for the evening, along with any other notes you want to have on hand. *(Optional)*

* Adapted from the Center for Applied Research Solutions' Virtual Learning Guidance, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ihC92x-kXI13b8eYNyr6zalMki7848Zj8jEblEQsvX8>. Accessed 3/17/20.

CONVENING A VIRTUAL TABLE

SUGGESTED FLOW

TO SERVE:

- 1. Say hello as folks join.** As with in-person gatherings, give people a grace window to arrive, in case a few are running late. It's important to make people feel welcome: Say hello to each person (by name), and encourage casual conversation as folks join, though it's okay for folks to mute their line and turn off video while they wait, too.
- 2. Welcome everyone to the virtual table.** Introduce yourself and share why you wish to gather tonight.
- 3. Share the Ground Rules.** (See P10.)
- 4. Read Brave Space.** We recommend reading it either as a group, or popcorn-style: As host, introduce the piece and read the first line, inviting people to read each line separately as they are moved to. (See P6.)
- 5. Cheers.** Offer a blessing, or toast those who bring you courage. (See "Toasts & Blessings" on P11 for additional ideas.)
- 6. Introductions:** Have everyone start with introductions. Our favorite: *"Tell us your name, and the story behind that name."* If folks are joining from different areas, have them share where they're calling from. (As you get started, we recommend calling people by name to introduce themselves.)
- 7. Check-in:** To start, keep it simple. *"How are you feeling?"* As host, be prepared to share first.*
- 8. Introduce Question 2:** *Take a few moments to think about a moment of struggle or hardship. What did you do*

that helped you get through it? How did this experience leave you changed?

- 9. Introduce Question 3:** *Describe a person who's bringing you hope right now, or someone who simply makes you proud of your community.*
- 10. Closing & Reflection.** What's one thing you will do to build and sustain connection and unity in your community both now and after coronavirus has passed? (Credit: *Our friends at [National Conversation Project](#)*)

* **Note:** Not quite feeling any of these? Check out P12-13 for additional questions, and pick whichever ones most resonate.

A few tips:

- **Want to give people permission to be vulnerable?** You have to be willing to do the same. Name your fears and struggles and the things you're carrying in this moment, whether related to coronavirus or not.
- **After you've shared,** we recommend having folks answer as they're ready, but you may want to call on people if it's a large group.

LET'S DO (DIGITAL) DINNER / DRINKS

Our friends at [Shoulder to Shoulder](#) work to counter discrimination and violence against Muslims. Every year during Ramadan, they host “*The United States of Love over Hate: A Ramadan Supper Series*.” They connect interfaith guests to Iftars — small- and large-scale dinners hosted in mosques, private homes, and restaurants to break the fast each night during Ramadan. This year, they’re working to take that campaign online, inviting non-Muslim families and households to connect with Muslim families and households and share a (virtual) meal together.

Food often plays a central role in spiritual traditions — and can be a powerful prompt for storytelling. It’s a chance for families to share the stories of what’s on their respective tables, and why, and to use that as a jumping off point for sharing other stories of the moments that matter most.

Looking for a fun conversation-starter, and an easy way to build connection? Schedule your gathering for an evening meal. Encourage people to make a dish with a story behind it: a family recipe, a dish that reminds you of home, etc. Invite everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, and what they’re eating tonight, and the story behind it.

Host a virtual happy hour: As our friend Priya Parker, author of [The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters](#) reminds us, “We won’t be able to fuss over the things I believe we have been wrongly fussing about for too long. We can’t worry about the fish knives. Or the stage lighting. Or the theme colors. Instead, we will have to focus on what we should have been focusing on long before the World Health Organization declared a pandemic: creating magic among people.”*

* Parker, P. (2020, March 17). How to Be Together Apart In the Time of Coronavirus. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/opinion/internet-coronavirus-social-distancing.htm>

The Upside of Stress: As a health psychologist, Kelly McGonigal used to teach students about the toxicity of stress, believing that by naming its dangers, she could convince people to reduce it, and thus live longer, happier lives. However, because many of the biggest sources of stress in our lives are unavoidable (hi, coronavirus!), she found her students weren’t getting less stressed out. They were simply panicking about what they were feeling. Then she came across a study that linked negative health outcomes not to stress itself, but to stress and the belief that stress was harmful. She wondered: By harping on about the dangers of stress, were we creating a self-fulfilling prophecy? The answer, as she uncovers in her book, [The Upside of Stress](#), is: Yes. Rather than focus on reducing stress in our lives, we need to rethink our relationship to it.

Exercise: You can do this exercise at home on your own, or invite folks to share their reflections as a group.

Take a few moments to think about an experience of loss or hardship, and what it’s taught you about your strengths and your bigger-than-self-goals. Write about the experience, addressing any or all of the following questions:

- What did you do that helped you get through it?
- What personal resources did you draw on, and what strengths did you use?
- Did you seek out information, advice, or any other kind of support?
- What did this experience teach you about how to deal with adversity?
- How did this experience make you stronger?

Now think about your situation today:

- Which of these strengths and resources can you draw on in this moment?
- Are there any coping skills or strengths you want to develop?
- If so, how could you begin to do so using this situation as an opportunity to grow?

(Credit: Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D.)

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE

Why “brave space”? The term “brave space” first emerged on college campuses, among faculty and students working in interracial dialogue. They realized that the common idea of “safe space” was an illusion, particularly for those who’ve been most marginalized. What’s more, too often, folks were confusing a safe space with a comfortable space. Learning to sit with each other’s truths means we have to learn to sit with discomfort. Being in honest conversation with each other takes courage — both to be vulnerable, and to stay present in the face of hurt feelings, knowing we won’t be perfect.

We use this poem to kick off every People’s Supper. You can have folks read it aloud together before you begin, or read it ahead of time. (*Tip: Worried that it will feel “cheesy”? Explain what you mean by brave space versus safe space, and preempt any skeptics by naming that you’re going to do something that might feel uncomfortable or “woo-woo” or otherwise cheesy together.*)

AN INVITATION TO BRAVE SPACE



Together we will create *brave space*
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space” —
We exist in the real world.
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
In this space
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
We call each other to more truth and love.
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be.
But
It will be *our brave space together*,
and
We will work on it side by side.

by Micky ScottBey Jones

GROUND RULES & HOW-TO'S

These ground rules aren't meant to box you in, they are meant to provide a sense of shared way of being during our time together. After reading through them, we think you'll get the drift that they are more concerned with underlying principles of love, respect and creating what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the Beloved Community and less about policing each other's behavior. So take a deep breath and dive into some ingredients for brave and engaging conversation.

Once you sit down, introduce the following ground rules:

- 1. Be present.** We often look at video chats as a chance to multitask. If you can, we encourage you to turn off other notifications during our time together, and to resist the urge to shift between tabs on a computer screen, or to engage in other tasks around you.
- 2. Stick with "I" statements and avoid advice-giving unless someone requests it.** Your experience is yours and please honor and respect that others' experiences are theirs. Putting this to practice is hard work: It means, in the words of our friends at [The Center for Courage & Renewal](#), "no fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other." (And if you want advice, or you're eager to learn about others' strategies and practices, just ask.)
- 3. Be patient and respectful with speaking turns and speaking times.** During voice calls, it's not unusual that meeting participants start talking over each other. Notice that you're talking more than others? Step back and give other voices a chance to be heard. Know that we welcome silence just as much as we welcome speech, and ask only that when you speak, you do so intentionally.
- 4. Beware erasure.** Empathy isn't "putting yourself in someone else's shoes." It's appreciating how very different it is to walk in my shoes than it is in your shoes. We know how powerful the words "me, too" can be, but

be careful to avoid what researcher and civil rights leader [John A. Powell](#) calls "sam-ing": "I don't see race," or "I don't see disability," or trying to relate to something you can't. ("My partner died." → "Oh, I know exactly what you're feeling. My parakeet died.") Sometimes the single best thing we can do for one another is simply to listen.

- 5. Keep things confidential.** What's said here stays here. No quotes or identifying details will be shared without permission.

A FEW TIPS

Group size: To give everyone a chance to hear and be heard, it's best to keep the group size small. We recommend a max of 9-12 people, so that you can easily see each other on the same screen. (Though groups as small as two or three can afford a welcome space of connection and relief, too.) If you're inviting a large group of people together, do it first-come, first-serve, or have multiple options so that you can meet demand.

The role of the facilitator: Virtual gatherings often require a heavier facilitation lift than in-person gatherings. To quote Erin Argyle Barnes, "the third rule of good video conferencing is facilitation." Video conferences are equally susceptible to what she calls "Fear of Un-Muting (FOUM)" and its equally frustrating cousin, "Everyone Un-Mutes At Once (EUMAO)". The facilitator's role is essentially "to tell everyone when to mute and unmute and talk... The facilitator will also say to someone, 'Oh Erin, it looks like you forgot to turn your video on.' Or 'Ken, can you mute?'" This is why it helps to have a co-host: Someone who can lift up questions in the chat box and troubleshoot with people if any technology issues arise.

* Barnes, E. A. (2020, March 10). Working during COVID-19: How to be good at video meetings. *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@erinargyle/working-during-covid-19-how-to-be-good-at-video-meetings-57f49fdb8dcd>

A FEW (MORE) TIPS

Should I call on people? It's up to you. We recommend calling on folks as you're doing introductions — in part because calling on people can help them feel that their voice matters. Be sure to share your own story first as a way to model honesty and thoughtfulness and the kind of space you wish to hold for one another. From there, you can continue calling on people one at a time, or you can invite folks to jump in as they're ready. (If you do choose to call on people to share, be sure to name at the outset that they can say "pass" if they'd prefer not to speak.)

Do we have to answer every question in order? Definitely not. Keep things conversational, and don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions. If the group is particularly energized by a certain question, feel free to let the conversation linger there. You want to warm people up to questions that invite real thoughtfulness or vulnerability, but you may find that some questions resonate and others don't. It's helpful to pick a couple of alternate questions as a back-up: If conversation stalls, you can offer them up, and let folks answer whichever questions they feel drawn to.

Does everyone have to share? Nope. As the folks at The Center for Courage & Renewal say, this is not a "share or die" event. But remember: There's a difference between being silent, and feeling silenced. Be mindful that everyone has a chance to speak. If some folks are holding back, you may want to say something to the effect of, *"I want to make sure everyone has a chance to name what's coming up for them. Anything anyone else would like to share before we move to the next question?"* And because it's often harder to speak up during video chats than in in-person conversation, you may want to say something to the effect of, *"Celia, I notice you've been a little quiet. Is there anything you want to add before we move on?"*

By invitation, not demand: Those of us who are often the catalysts for conversation can act with a sense of enthusiasm and urgency that intimidates

or overwhelms others. Share from the heart why it's important to you to gather tonight: Be honest and vulnerable within this space. But remember, to (again) quote, The Center for Courage & Renewal, "What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand." This isn't a sneaky way to have a meeting or recruit volunteers; it is not a way to hurry up the process, or to put fear and grief behind us so we can "move on" to other things. If people respond to the invitation, it's because it's what they need. If not, they may need something else or be getting their needs met somewhere else. The same holds true for the conversation itself: Participants should know that their presence is valued no matter how much they are willing to speak.

Have a start & stop time: We recommend 90 minutes, and no more than two hours: enough to give people time to connect without feeling like they are being asked to give up an entire day or evening. When stories surface that may trigger trauma or feelings of regret, loss, or grief, those at the table may want to organize additional time to talk, or they may just want to seek out time to be alone. Shorter gatherings can provide a quick break and chance to restore, rather than adding yet another obligation in a moment in which many are already overwhelmed by childcare, work anxiety or financial stresses, and feeling stir-crazy.

Your post-gathering mission: Do something that brings you joy. Hosting doesn't end when folks close their screens. The gathering, whether over a meal or not, will be a practice — and like contemplative practice (think: meditation), it isn't about perfection - it's about creating possibilities. The discussion might have felt intense or felt shallow — either way, you showed up and practiced creating brave space with other humans! Congratulations! At the end of the gathering, have a plan to do something that reminds you just how good life can be. Ask guests what they plan to do, and encourage them to share those stories with each other afterward.

TOASTS & BLESSINGS

Toasts are a great way to kick off a conversation. Once everyone has plated up, invite everyone to raise their glass (water, wine, whatever it may be).

...

“To kick-off, I want to invite everyone to close their eyes for one minute. I want you to think of someone you know and care about who’s having a rough time right now. Hold that person in your mind. Now, open your eyes, and we invite you to introduce yourself and share who it is you’re thinking about as we gather in this time. After each introduction, we will pause for a breath, holding each person together.”

...

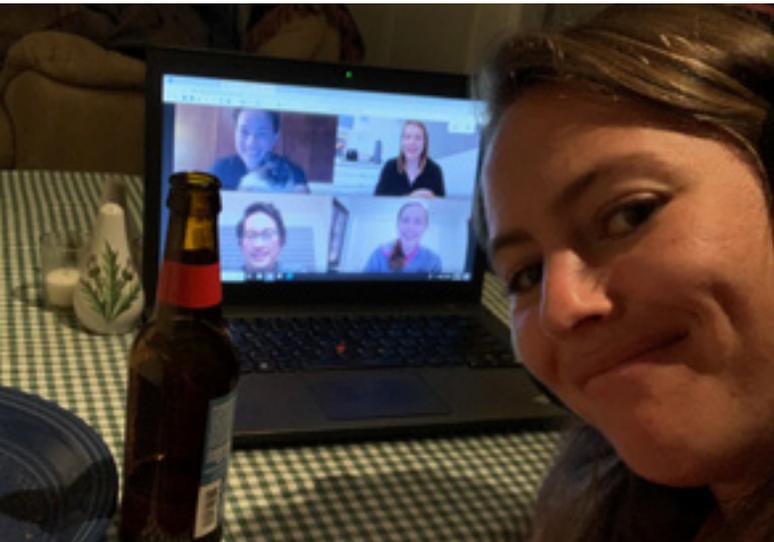
Bring a candle, and invite everyone to do the same. To kick things off, invite everyone to light their candle, and offer a blessing for those who’ve chosen to gather. *“As we go around and do introductions, I invite you to light your candle. Share your name, and the name of a person who inspires courage in you, living or dead, famous or familial, and why.”*

...

When you send out your instructions, ask everyone to bring a glass with them (water, wine: doesn’t matter). Invite everyone to close their eyes for 30 seconds, and to think of someone in

your life who’s having a hard time right now, and someone in your life who inspires you to be your best self. When everyone’s ready, invite them to open their eyes. *“I want us to raise a glass to those who are summoning the courage to keep going right now, and to the people whose strength we draw on, and to each and every one of us for making the effort to connect right now.”*

...



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You may notice that people simply need to talk about their experience in this moment. Here are a few questions to stimulate conversation and to invite folks to share what's on their mind right now:

 <p>Describe a time when you lived through a period of uncertainty.*</p>	 <p>Have you experienced any silver linings in the disruption?*</p>	 <p>Have you had to get creative to make do? How?*</p>
 <p>Is there anything or anyone you're appreciating more than you did before the crisis?*</p>	 <p>Who do you know who's doing a great job supporting people during this time? How are they doing it?*</p>	 <p>A line from a Wendell Berry poem reads, "Be joyful though you have considered all the facts." What does this mean for you — both considering all the facts and the idea of joy in this time?</p>

**Credit: National Conversation Project*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Looking for more? Here are some of our People's Supper go-to's:



Tell us something that would surprise people about what it's like to be you.



Describe a meaningful encounter or relationship with someone you didn't expect to connect with. What assumptions did you make about them, only to realize you were wrong?



Think back on a recent struggle. Whose support did you count on to get your through?



Describe a time you were anxious or intimidated and pushed ahead anyway. What did you take away from that experience?



Describe a formative experience that you don't often talk about.



Describe an experience when you were made to question something you'd held as a certainty.



Describe a time you were anxious or intimidated and pushed ahead anyway. What did you take away from that experience?



Tell us about a common misconception or belief people on the outside hold about our community.



Tell us about a person who makes you proud to be a part of your community.

OUR FAVE FACILITATION TOOLS

HELPFUL TIPS:

- **Mirror back.** Validate your guests' individual and unique experiences by always using reflective language back to them. When someone shares, try repeating back certain words and phrases that stand out to you, to help reiterate their point or meaning. And be precise in your language: If someone uses the word, "conservative" to describe themselves, don't substitute the word "Republican". Let people choose the labels they use for themselves and respectfully use them.
- **Practice active listening:**
 - “I hear you saying that ...”
 - “I appreciate you sharing with me that ...”
 - “What do you mean when you use that word?”
- **Acknowledge.** When someone shares their story, particularly one of struggle or trauma, it can be tempting to try to “fix” it. Don't. The most powerful thing we can do for one another is simply to witness. Physical gestures — eye contact, placing your hand on your heart, simply choosing to breathe deeply with someone — can go a long way. You can also try phrases like “Thank you for sharing your story,” and “Wow, I need a moment to sit with that. Thank you for trusting us to hold that with you.”
- **Stick with open and honest questions:** This technique comes from our friends at the Center for Courage & Renewal. Writes founder Parker Palmer, “An honest, open question is one you cannot possibly ask while thinking, ‘I know the right answer to this and I sure hope you give it to me ...’ Thus, ‘Have you ever thought about seeing a therapist?’ is not an honest, open question! But, ‘What did you learn from the experience you just told us about?’ is.”
- **Step up / Step back:** If you normally speak a lot,

try to listen more. If you tend to stay quiet, use this as a chance to speak up.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR:

- **Ball-hogs:** Notice someone dominating a conversation? Gently redirect by opening a question back to the group. For ex: “I’m curious if there’s something in _____’s story that mirrors something in your own life? Or that gives you a window into something you haven’t experienced?” Or simply, “I want to pause you right there, simply because I want to make sure that everyone who wants to share has that chance.”
- **Advice-givers:** Remind everyone that we’re not here to fix each other, and to remember the first Ground Rule and to stick to “I” statements. “I’m hearing you respond to _____’s story. Can you answer the question with a story about you?”
- **Intellectualizing:** Try these useful host questions: “Can you talk about that from your own experience?” “Can you share a story that illustrates that?”
- **Remind people they have a right to their feelings. They don’t have the right to deny others’ theirs.** Every person is an expert in their own story, and no one else’s. “You have a right to your feelings.”

THINGS TO AVOID

- “Don’t you think that’s ...”
- “Don’t you think we should be doing _____ right now instead of feeling angry/sad/mad, etc.?”
- “But what can we do about it?”
- “Who’d you vote for?”

WHAT (& WHAT NOT) TO SAY WHEN DISCUSSING COVID-19

We love the guidelines put together by the folks at [Awaken](#), which offers interactive, thought-provoking workshops that enable today's workforce to address tough diversity and inclusion, leadership, and culture questions head-on. Check it out:

- 1. Call out racism and xenophobia.** With uncertainty comes fear and anxiety. When we're fearful, we're prone to making hasty decisions that cause harm. [Anti-Asian/Chinese racism](#) is on the rise globally as well as biased media coverage and narratives. Please be vigilant about calling in harmful and biased narratives regarding coronavirus.
- 2. How we discuss the situation matters.** Using statements intended to comfort others such as "only old and sick people need to worry" or "you're young and healthy, you're fine" can have an unintended consequence of further marginalizing those who are most vulnerable. Please encourage everyone to prioritize the most marginalized by taking the issue seriously, ensuring equitable resource and supplies allocation, and doing their part to minimize potential transmission.
- 3. Consider the impact of the situation on folks who are caregivers to the elderly, infants, and/or immunocompromised folks, who experts have determined are most prone to being severely impacted.**
- 4. Reach out to friends, family and those affected, in quarantine, or who are in high risk groups, virtually and by phone.** Let your people know you're thinking about them. Continue to take care of each other in all the ways we know how.
- 5. Mitigate dissemination of false information designed to spread fear and hysteria.** Share only verified information by trusted sources to fight against misinformation.
- 6. Take precautions to keep yourself and others healthy including washing your hands often (20 seconds!) and avoiding exposure when you're not well.**

JOIN THE NATIONWIDE MOVEMENT

It can be powerful to realize others across the country are feeling — and doing — the same thing.

Our friends at the [National Conversation Project](#) — powered by hundreds of partner organizations, including The People's Supper — are encouraging folks to share their stories and experiences using the hashtag #WeavingCommunity.

If participants feel comfortable, do a screen-grab* as you close the evening. (If people don't feel comfortable having their photo taken, just take a selfie after it's over.) Tell us about the gathering: how it felt to connect, the themes that came up, what it was like to host, and what's bringing you hope. Remember: You're welcome to share your own experience, but if you want to share something someone shared, ask them for permission first, and be sure to avoid identifying details.

After the supper, jot down a few notes on what went well and what didn't: favorite moments, themes that came up, what you'd like to see more of next time, etc. Share your story and tell us how it went by emailing us at info@thepeoplesupper.org, and posting online using the #WeavingCommunity hashtag. We'd also love to celebrate your participation by putting you on the map at [Weaving2020.org](#). Add your info there!

****To take a screenshot of a portion of your screen on a Mac:***

1. *Press and hold these three keys together: Shift, Command, and 4.*
2. *Drag the crosshair to select the area of the screen to capture. To move the selection, press and hold Space bar while dragging. To cancel taking the screenshot, press the Esc (Escape) key.*
3. *To take the screenshot, release your mouse or trackpad button. The screenshot will save to your desktop.*

[For instructions on various ways you can take a screenshot on a PC, click here.](#)



BEYOND DINNER

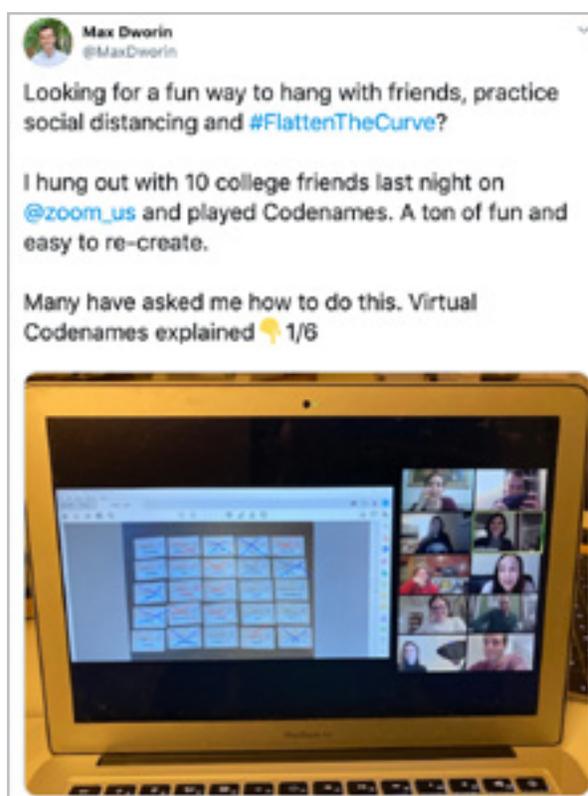
OTHER WAYS TO SOCIALLY CONNECT AT A PHYSICAL DISTANCE

Make a standing date. Want to keep the conversation going? Consider announcing a standing night of the month for a community dinner for a period of time. Give others a chance to contribute, and know you don't have to carry the load alone. Pick questions you didn't get to the first time, or ask the group what they struggle to talk about and how this space might help them to open up: Whatever works for your group is what's best.

Make it a movie night. You no longer have to be in the same living room or movie theatre to watch a movie together. [Netflix Party](#) is a great way to watch a movie together virtually. It will stop, start, and pause everyone's movie in unison, with comment options to discuss it as you watch.

Organize an in-home scavenger hunt: This is a particularly great way to engage younger and older folks alike. Set aside an hour or so for, and set up a group text with all participants. When the time comes, send them something to look for, and see who can be the first person to send a photo with that item in it. Once they've all sent a photo, send the next item to look for. Item ideas: A book with a blue cover; a crazy photograph, something you are so glad you have while you're home, etc.

Play a virtual game: In this moment, the gift of play and fun in this moment is no small thing. Think about games you normally play in-person: Which ones could you adapt and play online? Becca on our team loves virtual games of Werewolf: [See quick tutorial here](#). Send out a Zoom link, and ask participants to bring a pen and paper. Have the moderator text the participants their role: 2 werewolves, 1 doctor, 1 seer, and everyone else is a villager. When the werewolves, doctor, and seer are invited to open their eyes for their part, have them write the name on a piece of paper and hold it up so the moderator can see the name on the video. The rest is the same. Enjoy!



Complete instructions: <https://twitter.com/MaxDworin/status/1239286874608451584>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

HOW TO HELP

Want to lend a hand? Check out a few orgs we love that are helping folks in critical need right now.

Mutual Aid networks: Across the country and around the world, neighbors and community groups are coming together to create mutual aid networks for sharing resources, guidance, and organizing (bit.ly/whatismutualaid). The efforts tend to be hyper-local, with the goal of matching the needs of folks who are isolated or otherwise at-risk financially or economically to people with something to offer, whether in the form of financial donations or goods and services. To find a group near you, take a look at a [growing directory of more than 150 local groups in 36 states and counting](#) here in the U.S. and [hundreds of similar grassroots groups springing up in the UK](#). Mutual aid groups are supporting each other by sharing resources, running errands, and providing financial support and emotional care. Additional resources can be found at bit.ly/covid19collectivecare.

GoFundMe: GoFundMe.org started a [COVID-19 Relief Fund](#) to support organizations working to keep communities safe. In addition, they've compiled more than 100 campaigns supporting relief efforts across the country and around the world: everything from supporting restaurant workers in and near Washington, DC and northern Virginia, to artists in San Francisco and Texas, to a Halal-friendly food bank in Mississauga, Ontario.

National Domestic Workers Alliance: The National Domestic Workers Alliance is working to slow the spread of the virus by providing emergency assistance for domestic workers that enables them to stay home and healthy. [Give today](#).

KIVA: Kiva is working to support local businesses throughout the US that have been affected by the coronavirus. They're offering expanded eligibility for zero-interest loans, larger loans of up to \$15,000, and a grace period of up to six months for new borrowers. [Give today](#).

Restaurant Opportunities Centers (ROC USA):

ROC United works to improve wages and working conditions for restaurant workers nationwide, including advocating for paid sick leave for restaurant workers in all food chains.

Freelancers Union: Freelancers Union has been advocating on independent workers' behalf since 1995, giving our members access to education, resources, community, benefits, and a political voice. Their team is working to ensure that any #COVID19 emergency relief package includes domestic workers, freelancers, gig workers, & others who wouldn't normally qualify for unemployment.

Other ways to gather:

Family Chapel: For the foreseeable future, our friends at the Sacred Design Lab are hosting what they call "Family Chapel," a gentle, 25-minute intentional experience of shared reflection, every weekday at 12pm Eastern Time. Together, you're invited to light a candle, share silence, music, and text, reflect in small groups, and receive a blessing. [Full context and instructions on how to join here](#). If you'd like to host your own Family Chapel online, they've put together a [simple facilitator guide here](#).

Additional Resources:

- [A Listening Care Package for Uncertain Times:](#) A collection of podcasts and poetry for however you're processing or experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic (*Created by the Editors at On Being*)
- [Center for Applied Research, Virtual Learning Guidance](#) (*Originally written for internal staff and contractors, the guide is being shared widely.*)
- [Tips on virtual/IRL hybrid meetings for sharing](#) (*Credit: Sierra Club's Organizing team*)

SEE YOU AT SUPPER.

For more, visit
thepeoplessupper.org,
or email us at
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