



# PEOPLE, POLITICS, & REWEAVING THE SOCIAL FABRIC:

A SUPPER, STORY-SHARING, & LISTENING  
GUIDEBOOK

THE   
PEOPLE'S  
SUPPER



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## Dear People's Supper Family,

The day after the 2016 election, I received a text from a friend who lives across the street. It read, *"I'm sorry. I voted for Trump. I didn't think he'd win."*

We hadn't talked about politics the whole election season. This was the first time, and the election was over. As I stared down at that text, I was confused, angry and frankly, tired. I had of course, had many conversations with people on Facebook, Twitter and around tables about the election, but had not had a single conversation with my neighbor and friend and there we were unsure of how to continue in relationship with each other.

The People's Supper was created out of a desire to help neighbors and friends talk to each other, even with taboo topics. We've trained and supported people to facilitate dinner conversation on many topics — from interfaith solidarity to sexual assault to bridging across lines of difference. As a team, we share a commitment to being engaged in local and national civic life as people who are committed to what our friend, Eric Liu at Citizen University, describes as a "shared sense of civic power and moral purpose".

You've probably experienced something like I did with my friend, or worse — attacking each other online and around our family dinner tables, allowing our language about each other to mirror the worst jabs on cable news. Those outside our bubbles are reduced to caricatures. To those in conservative cultures, liberals are "loathsome, misinformed and weak, even dangerous,"<sup>1</sup> to those in liberal enclaves, conservatives are reduced to "deplorables," entrenched in "ignorance, racism, sexism, nationalism, [and] Islamophobia"<sup>2</sup>.

But over the last year, we've witnessed something else, too: Leaders in business and faith and civil society who recognize that we're stronger together than apart. Ordinary citizens for whom helping your neighbors is simply "how we do things here". People who are finding ways to disarm hot-button topics, recognizing our ability to live and work together depends on it. An emerging movement of civic innovators committed to bringing people together across difference, who are choosing to examine our histories and the present-day effects of those histories in order to find a shared path forward for folks across class, race, faith, and generational lines.

We invite you to be a part of a different story — a story made up of all our stories, told around a table. Grab a seat and pass the rolls.

In hopefulness,

Micky ScottBey Jones & The People's Supper Team  
*October 2018*

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1 <http://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/05/opinion/why-rural-america-voted-for-trump.html>  
2 Ibid.

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# 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 that trust moves at the speed of relationships. It is guided by a simple question:

## "WHAT NEEDS HEALING HERE?"

We launched The People's Supper in the wake of the 2016 election, as a way to intentionally cultivate connection and community across difference, and to change the very definition of who belongs.

Since then, we've worked on projects ranging from a two-year collaboration with the Mayor's Office in Erie, PA, anchored by a series of racial healing suppers, to efforts to bring together 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. Altogether, we've brought more than 10,000 people together around dinner tables in over 100 cities and towns nationwide, with partners including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Silver Thread Public Health, the Oak Ridge Ministerial Association, Righteous Persons Foundation, the Office of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, 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 co-founders at the [Faith Matters Network](#) — which works to equip faith leaders, community organizers, and activists with resources for spiritual sustainability — continue to serve in a consulting capacity.



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# WANT BETTER CONVERSATIONS? ASK BETTER QUESTIONS.

In the five weeks leading up to the 2018 midterm elections, we hosted five large-scale suppers in Grand Rapids, MI, Creede, CO, Washington, DC, Charlotte, NC, and Staten Island, NY. **Our goal was simple: In a moment of acute political division, we sought to prove that a group of thoughtful people who differ from one another — politically, culturally, racially, generationally, religiously, and economically — can sit down over a shared meal and engage in a meaningful conversation together.**

But those large-scale suppers were just part of the picture, because what's happening in each of those cities and towns is part of a shared story.

Real change depends on each of us choosing to connect with each other, in homes, community centers, houses of worship, and backyards. It depends on our choosing to put down the labels and assumptions we make of one another. It depends on each of us choosing to humanize rather than politicize. Turns out, when we tell our own stories instead of delivering political talking points or statistics, we allow for a relationship that isn't dependent on shared belief.

**This guidebook includes everything you need to know to host a supper of your own, designed for deep listening and meaningful sharing of our stories as Americans. In times like these, when respectful dialogue feels like an unusual experience, we invite you to create a different story.**

“I believe men hate each other because they fear each other and they fear each other because they don't know each other. They don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other and they don't communicate with each other because they are separate from one another.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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# HOW IT WORKS

## OPTION 1: THE OPEN HOUSE

It may feel right to offer more of an “open house”, drop-in style gathering than a formal sit-down supper.

This may take a little brainstorming about how to arrange things. You can do it buffet-style, so people can fix a plate when they arrive. Ask a few folks to look out for people entering so that everyone gets greeted when they arrive.

It can be difficult to know what to say to each other, even in your own neighborhood or community. **Take a look at P11, 12, and 19 for a variety of tried-and-tested discussion questions.** There are lots of ways to play with these, so do whatever feels most comfortable: You can cut them out and scatter them throughout the room, or hand them

out to guests as they arrive. You can also place them in a bowl in the center of the room.

Invite everyone to pick a card, and take turns discussing each one, eventually working your way to the bottom of the bowl. Or, simply keep them in your back pocket as you engage in conversation.

When there seems to be a steady flow of people, you might call for attention and explain a little about why you are hosting and what you're hoping for out of your time together.



# HOW IT WORKS

## OPTION 2: THE SHARED TABLE

*Dinner tables can be a place of rest, reflection, healing, and hope in the moments we need it most. Keep in mind that just as no two stories are ever exactly alike, no two dinners will ever be quite the same. Feel free to make it your own.*

### TO PREP:

1. **Send out an invite.** (Yup, a text thread can totally work.) For tips on how to curate your guestlist, see P14.
2. **Send a confirmation email to all guests.** Check to see if anyone has any food allergies, and have folks sign up to bring a dish. (Bonus: Encourage people to bring a dish with a story behind it: a family recipe, a dish that reminds you of home, etc. )
3. **Cook up the main dish & set the table.** Leave a few things unfinished, so you can give people something to do as they filter in.

### TO SERVE:

1. **Plate up!**
2. **Welcome everyone to the table.** Share why it's important to you to gather together tonight.
3. **Set the intention, by naming that our goal is to create a "brave space" together.** (See P8). You may wish to read the poem on the following page as inspiration, either as a group, or popcorn-style: reading the first line yourself, and inviting people to read each line separately as they are moved to.
4. **Share the Ground Rules** (See P9).
5. **Cheers.** Offer a blessing, or toast those who bring you courage (see examples on P10). Dig in!
6. **Introductions:** Tell us your name, and the story behind that name. (Or, simply have everyone share what brings them to the table.)
7. **Introduce Question 1\*: Who are your people? What places or communities do you go to when you need to release and restore yourself?** As host, your role is to model it, so be

prepared to share first. You can choose to go around the table or do it popcorn-style, with folks jumping in as they're ready.

8. **Introduce Question 2: Tell us about a moment in which you've been made to feel unwelcome, or misunderstood.**
9. **Introduce Question 3: Describe a time when you felt the opposite: when you felt profoundly welcome, and experienced a true sense of belonging. What was it that made you feel that way?**
10. **Closing & Reflection.** Fifteen minutes before the scheduled end (or thereabouts), serve dessert. This helps to bring the conversation toward an end. To close, have everyone share a word or phrase that reflects what they're going to take away from the meal.

*\*Note: Not quite feeling any of these? Check out pages 11, 12, and 19 for additional questions, and pick whichever ones most resonate.*

# CREATING 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 take a lot of inspiration from this poem by Beth Strano. You’re welcome to read it aloud together before you begin\*, or to share it with participants ahead of time, as a way of shining a light on the kind of space you wish to create together. (*\*Tip: Worried reading a poem aloud 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.)

\*\*\*

there’s no such thing  
as a safe space  
we exist in the real world  
and we all carry scars  
and have cause wounds  
this space  
seeks to to turn down  
the volume of the  
world outside and  
amplify the voices  
that have to fight to  
be heard elsewhere  
this space will not be perfect. it will  
not always be what  
we wish it to be. but  
it will be ours together and we  
will work on it side by side.

by Beth Strano



Image provided by Beth Strano.



# 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. [The Center for Courage & Renewal](#) calls their guiding principles touchstones, other groups call them agreements. 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. Stick with "I" statements and avoid advice-giving.** 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."** Your job is to silence the noise and tune into your inner voice, trusting that everyone else at the table has the power to do the same. Simply speak your truth.
- 2. Pass the mic, and allow for silence.** Notice that you're talking more than others at the table? 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.
- 3. Keep things private:** What happens at the table stays at the table. No quotes or identifying details will be shared without permission.
- 4. Check yourself on whether you are advocating or attempting to influence others.** (Shout-out to our friends at Speaking Down Barriers for this one: <http://www.speakdownbarriers.org>.)
- 5. Be aware of the privilege you hold in a conversation.** If yours is a voice that's had to fight

to be heard elsewhere, know that tonight, you don't have to fight. If you're someone who's never had to fight to be heard, make space for those who have.

## A FEW TIPS:

**Group size:** To avoid having conversations splinter off, and to give everyone a chance to hear and be heard, it's best to keep the group size small. Tables of 6-10 tend to work well, though smaller groups are fine, too. Hosting a larger event? Have enough tables or spaces available to allow everyone to stay in small groups, without having to shout over one another. And be sure to have at least one "table host" at each, to kick off the conversation and lightly facilitate as needed

**Should we go in a circle?** It's up to you. When doing introductions, 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 choose to go around the table in a circle or do it popcorn-style, with folks jumping in as they're ready. The key thing here is to maintain one conversation, with one person speaking at a time.

## 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. Note that the questions, and the order in which they're asked, were chosen carefully: 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.

**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?"*

# 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).*

A toast to more connection and opportunities to listen with compassion and care.

...

To hope and promise! May we be open to new ways of being human together around this table by sharing from our personal lives.

...

We are grateful for this time, this food, this place and those who have prepared this space and welcomed us in. May we feel this sense of gracious hospitality throughout our night together.

...

Some come to this table with pain and some with joy. May we all know we can bring our full selves to this table and find acceptance and embrace for our full human experience.

...

Let us celebrate the bravery of sharing stories and finding new ways to have conversations with deep listening and heart connections. Let us be open. Let us be real. Let us show up in new ways for one another.

...

Invite everyone to light a tealight candle and share the name of a person who inspires courage in you, living or dead, famous or familial, and why. Toast those just named, and those who inspire us to be our best selves, and ourselves and each other for having the guts to step into a space of vulnerability right now.

...

**“We tear each other apart and fail to see the human on the other side.”**

**GLENN BECK**



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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Who are your people?  
What places or communities do you go to when you need to release and restore yourself?



Tell us about a moment in which you've been made to feel unwelcome, or misunderstood.



Describe a time when you felt profoundly welcome, and experienced a true sense of belonging.



Tell us a story from your upbringing that gives us a picture of your first experience with community. What was positive in this? What can you now see that it was missing? How does this set you up for your own hopes for building community? A neighborhood? A country?



What makes talking about politics hard for you, or has made it difficult in the past?



Do you feel free to express your identities? Why or why not? (These could be religious, racial, gender- or sexuality-based, ideological, etc.)



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



Think about someone you don't get along with. What's something you think have in common?



What's one thing that could change that would help you feel more seen and heard with your full self in this community?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



What feeling is rising to the surface for you in this moment?



Share a story about someone you love but with whom you disagree about something.



Who taught you to exercise your voice in the world?



What's a belief you hold that's changed a lot in the last 5-10 years?



What words come to mind for you when you think about politics?



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



Who or what has influenced the way that you show up in the world?



Who is someone you know, a historical figure, or a figure from your faith tradition who models healing of themselves and others in community?



Tell us about a recent experience that gave you hope.

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## SUGGESTED TIPS

*Close your eyes. Imagine you're doing the dishes. The supper's ended, the last person just walked out the door. 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. Treat all of this as a tool and a starting point, and make it your own.

Whichever path you choose, here are five sets of tips to bring folks together:

1. **Putting together your guest list (P14)**
2. **What this is & isn't: A word on self- and collective-care (P15)**
3. **Keeping It Short, Sweet, & Simple (P16)**
4. **Our fave facilitation tools (P17)**
5. **After supper: Suggestions to keep the conversation going (P18)**

**And don't forget! Be sure to document the gathering.**

If folks feel comfortable, snap a family photo as you close the evening, or simply take a picture of the food and table. Tag us at @peoplesupper, using the hashtag #PeoplesSupper. 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](mailto:info@thepeoplesupper.org).



**“Social change moves at the speed of relationships. Relationships move at the speed of trust.”**

**REV. JENNIFER BAILEY**

# 1. PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR GUEST LIST

## HOW TO CREATE AND NURTURE COMMUNITY

- 1. Identify objectives:** A few questions you might want to ponder: *Who's not in relationship and should be? What's getting in the way of the civic work we need to do together, and where could our community use a little more trust? What are the conversations here that feel taboo or otherwise polarizing? What might we have to offer the country that other communities don't have?*
- 2. 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 to the invitation to friends of theirs, with careful thought to what kind of language will best speak to them. And remember: You want to invite people who are willing and able to listen - not just talk. Story-based dialogue only works when people can listen to one another. They don't have to agree – they just have to be able to listen.
- 3. Speak using shared language.** Beware words that are code for “liberal” or “conservative”, and be sure to mirror the language of your audience in your invitation. The Village Square has a terrific blog post on the subject: <https://tlh.villagesquare.us/blog/welcoming-conservatives/>. And we're big fans of this video featuring Tea Party co-founder Debbie Dooley about finding neutral language: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbmt\\_WeNBck](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbmt_WeNBck)
- 4. Find a nonjudgmental space** that's welcoming to people from different backgrounds, life experiences, cultural and religious differences. Remember: the purpose of this dinner is to have dialogue that is not persuasive, but rather connects us to one another through the sharing of personal stories.

- 5. Talk** about challenges or new issues revealed by current stress and trauma. Perhaps your community is not as diverse, courageous, or impactful as you would like it to be. There may be confusion, interpersonal conflict, fear, deep emotions and pain: Choose to throw the elephant out of the room (whatever form the elephant may take), and be comfortable naming your own discomfort with difficult conversations. Talking about it can ease the soul, create breathing room, and make space to work through issues.

## REAL TALK ABOUT SAFETY

If you have an open event, be aware that there may be people who intend to do harm - specifically to people who are the objects of their hate. Consider ways in which you can hold space for fear and concern about physical safety and continue to gather in a way that minimizes risk.

- Share location and meeting time with guests only. If you are using an open platform like Facebook to invite guests, share specifics like time and location via email or private message after connecting with each guest.
- Stick with guests who are known or recommended. It is a good idea to stick with people you already trust or whom you have gotten a sense of through a short conversation.
- If you're planning a larger event, consider if your supper needs a security team, a greeter at the front door, or a more private location.
- Check in to see if folks have concerns about safety because of location or guests. Talk through concerns and check with us at The People's Supper for more support and problem solving around issues of psychological and physical safety.

## 2. WHAT THIS IS & ISN'T

### A WORD ON SELF- AND COLLECTIVE-CARE

*Remember, these suppers are peer-led community gatherings and may be therapeutic, but they are not therapy.*

Across time and culture and spiritual tradition, people have been sitting in circles telling their stories to each other. We tell our stories to our hair stylists and baristas, and that stranger at that party, in those rare and chance moments when the veil between each other lifts, and we're able to see each other's truth without being scandalized by it, to witness and be witnessed.

We're not interested in professionalizing anything, but in humanizing everything: You don't need any special training, knowledge, or equipment. Bring your empathy & kindness, and invite others to bring theirs.

Politics affects intimate areas of our lives like healthcare, our jobs, education for children we love and how we live and love. Strong feelings can come up as we tell stories about engaging the process of citizenship or becoming an engaged voter. The questions suggested and the format given in this guide are designed to elicit storytelling, not debate, and to encourage listening, not convincing. As the host, your job is to model how to share your story and how to listen to others share theirs, and to draw out connections between individuals. Remember we aren't fixing each other - we are practicing seeing each other's humanity.

If you yourself are a clinician, pastoral caregiver or anyone working in mental health or counseling, remember that this is a chance to take off that hat for a night, and show up as a peer, not a professional.

#### THIS IS



- Conversation where we practice nonjudgmental dialogue with room for all voices.
- Sharing personal stories.
- Engaging in dialogue that is humanized not politicized.

#### THIS IS NOT



- Conversation based in political talking points.
- A space for debate or persuasive arguments.

# 3. KEEPING IT SHORT, SWEET & SIMPLE

## 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 share stories and experiences of abortion: Be honest and vulnerable within this space.

Our friends at The Center for Courage & Renewal share this Touchstone (a kind of community guideline for “safe and trustworthy space”) for their Circle of Trust gatherings and it's helpful to keep in mind here:

*What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand. This is not a “share or die” event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.*

With The People's Supper, what is offered as a gathering is done 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.

Offering a supper gives people options for connection but doesn't work if they are coerced or guilted into participation. You are communicating a shared need for togetherness and your time together will be meaningful, be it three people or fifteen.

This call to invite as opposed to demand also holds true for the conversation shared during the supper. Guests should know that their presence is valued no matter how much they are willing to speak.

## HAVE A SUPPER START & STOP TIME.

Plan a gathering with a start and stop time. Two hours or less can give people time to connect without feeling like they are being asked to give up an entire day or evening. When stories surface that that may trigger trauma or feelings of regret, relief, loss, or grief, those people at the table with abortion experiences may want to organize additional actions or conversations with

loved ones to coordinate support and care, 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 to an overwhelming to-do list.

## K.I.S.S.

You've probably heard the acronym KISS – Keep It Simple Silly – as a way of encouraging people to keep things simple when planning. Pinterest and Instagram may tell a different story, but it really is okay to keep things simple. Be aware of your own energy levels in this moment: If you are typically the kind of person who goes all out for a dinner party or even a potluck, allow yourself to resist that impulse unless it serves you.

### Ideas for food:

- Offer tea and coffee and ask people to bring fruit, veggies, and light snacks to go with it
- Order pizza – everyone can pitch in a few dollars
- Store-bought – ask everyone to bring something from the store, agreeing to nothing fancy
- Picnic – have a picnic in the backyard (so you don't have to clean the house before or after!)

“O, let America be America again—  
The land that never has been yet—  
And yet must be—the land where every  
man is free.”

LANGSTON HUGHES



# 4. OUR FAVE FACILITATION TOOLS

## HELPFUL TIPS:

- **Mirror back.** Validate your guests' individual and unique experiences by always using reflective language back to them. For example, 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.

- **Oops / Ouch:** Catch yourself giving advice or saying something insensitive? Call it out, with a simple, "oops," and try again. Hurt by something someone inadvertently said? Part of practicing "brave space" is naming what hurts, knowing we won't be perfect.

## 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?"*

## 5. AFTER SUPPER

### SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

**First things first:** Doing the dishes is a collective act! Ask those who can to stick around to help clean up.

**Your post-dinner mission:** Do something that brings you joy. Hosting doesn't end with washing the dishes. The dinner 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 supper, 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.

**Invite guests to an after-supper hang:** A way to share the host responsibilities is to partner with someone else (or if you feel up to it - do it yourself) for an after-supper gathering. If people need more support, want to continue conversations, or just want to not be alone, offer a less formal way of being together after the supper. This can even be a time to watch a funny movie together, to play music and sing, to take turn up some music and dance, or just hang out. Sometimes we wait to gather for birthdays and holidays or wait for someone else to call. An after supper gathering can be a time to just be together – no agenda but to be human beings together. It can be a powerful and needed reminder of our shared humanity.

**Make a standing date:** Consider announcing a standing night of the week for a community supper for a period of time, and see if others there are open to rotating hosts and houses. Give others a chance to contribute, and know you don't have to carry the load alone.

This might look like different people agreeing to physically host at their homes, while you continue to play the role of facilitator and “space-holder” within the conversation. Or, maybe you agree to meet at the same place every week or two for a few weeks, and to take on a different theme each time. Pick questions you didn't get to the first time, or ask your guests what they long to be asked and create your list of questions together.

How you share the needs for a series of suppers is up to you – and whatever works for your group is what's best. In keeping with the spirit of the suppers, just make sure whomever is hosting has support materials like this toolkit and other resources and gets support from The People's Supper team as needed.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”

AUDRE LORDE

# BEYOND THE FIRST DINNER: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

*A single evening can be enough to forge surprising connections with people you wouldn't normally find yourself in conversation with. But real relationships? Those are the product of time.*

*Want to get to know each other better? Take a look at the questions below, and pick and choose the ones that speak to you. You may try putting all of the questions in a bowl in the center of the table,*

*and inviting guests to pick them one at a time, eventually working your way to the bottom of the bowl. Over time, you may find that conversations unfold organically, as gatherings become a chance for folks around the table to check in with one another — honestly, openly, fully — and that you no longer need a prompt.*

WHAT WOULD YOUR BEST FRIEND SAY ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT MAKES YOU TICK?\*

WHERE OR FROM WHOM DID YOU LEARN TO STAND UP FOR THE THINGS YOU BELIEVE IN? DESCRIBE A TIME IN WHICH SOMEONE STOOD UP FOR YOU OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT. DESCRIBE A TIME IN WHICH YOU STOOD UP FOR SOMEONE WHO NEEDED IT.

*Describe a moment of kindness that really meant something to you.*

What is "home" to you? What makes you feel at home?

*Describe a time in which you felt afraid, or watched someone you love experience fear.*

WHAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT TENDS TO SURPRISE PEOPLE?



WHO IN YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST TEACHER, AND WHY?

WHAT'S THE BEST LESSON YOU'VE EVER BEEN TAUGHT, AND BY WHOM?

*When do you feel most free in your life? When do you feel restricted?\**



DESCRIBE A TIME IN WHICH YOU WERE BULLIED. DESCRIBE A TIME IN WHICH YOU WERE THE BULLY.

WHO IN YOUR LIFE HAVE YOU FORGIVEN? WHOSE FORGIVENESS DO YOU LONG TO ASK FOR?

# HUNGRY FOR MORE?

*Having a meal together as engaged citizens is just one way to be civic-minded. You may find that you or those who are gathered need or want additional resources. Here's a small sampling, and a simple Google search will reveal loads more. If you find a really great bipartisan resource, please email us at [info@thepeoplesupper.org](mailto:info@thepeoplesupper.org) and let us know. You may also want to keep a local list going so that you can refer to it whenever needs arise.*

## [Administration for Community Living - Voting Resources for Older Americans and People With Disabilities](#)

A United States government Voting Resources for Older Americans and People with Disabilities

## [Citizen University](#)

Citizen University is a national platform for fostering responsible and empowered citizenship through activation, communication, and education.

## [Rock the Vote](#)

Rock the Vote is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to building the political power of young people.

## [Vote 411](#)

Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, VOTE411.org is a “one-stop-shop” for election related information. It provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific information on the following aspects of the election process:

- Absentee ballot information
- Ballot measure information (where applicable)
- Early voting options (where applicable)
- Election dates
- Factual data on candidates in various federal, state and local races
- General information on such topics as how to watch debates with a critical eye
- ID requirements
- Polling place locations
- Registration deadlines
- Voter qualifications
- Voter registration forms
- Voting machines

## [#VoteTogether](#)

#VoteTogether is a national campaign to increase voter participation by making voting fun and celebratory. At thousands of nonpartisan events hosted at and near polling places across the country, #VoteTogether partners will bring together families, friends and neighbors in a celebration of civic engagement and the act of voting. #VoteTogether events—including block parties, BBQs, and parades—will take place during early voting and on Election Day. The program is launching in partnership with 150 state and local organizations, several corporate partners, and with 500 confirmed events.

**“The more you know about another person’s story, the less possible it is to see that person as your enemy...When we share the sources of our pain with each other instead of hurling our convictions like rocks at ‘enemies,’ we have a chance to open our hearts and connect across some of our greatest divides.”**

**PARKER PALMER**

**SEE YOU AT SUPPER.**

For more, visit  
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or email us at  
[info@thepeoplessupper.org](mailto:info@thepeoplessupper.org).

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