

6 Conversations to Build Community

Week 6

An OLLI Discussion class based on Peter Block's
Community, the Structure of Belonging

Anne Brack, Spring 2026

Class Outcomes and Expectations

- By the end of the class:
 - Understand ways to use Peter Block's conversations in your life.
 - Learn Constructed Conversations technique to convene small group discussions.
 - Build relationships with each other and get a deeper sense of community.
 - Learn something about yourself.
 - Attempt to use an example about convening a community discussion.
- In Class:
 - Be prepared to talk candidly.
 - Use something from your life to talk about, you don't have to come in as a Community Organizer.
 - Maintain confidentiality. What is shared in here needs to stay in here.

Class Flow



- Class 1:
 - Class outcomes
 - Introductions and check in
 - Book at a Glance
 - Practicing Community: Small Group Exercises and Sharing
- **Classes 2-6**
 - 2:15 - 2:25 – Opening Reflection & Check-in
 - 2:25 – 2:35 – Book at a Glance plus – 1-2 Conversations
 - 2:35 – 3:20 – Guided Practices in Groups of three, with large group share
 - 3:20 – 3:30 – Takeaways and Close

Check in with each other:

- Break into groups of 3
- For 1 minute each, take turns answering: Why was it important for you to be here?
- Large group share back: What insight did you have to share with the group?
- Check in – How are you doing listening?

Review

- **Book at a Glance (The Alchemy of Belonging, Part II):**
 - Overall Premise, **Operating Guidelines**
 - Context of Restorative Community.
 - The Inversion of Cause and Accountability
 - Leadership and Transformation.
 - Power of a small group: unit of transformation.
 - Questions are more transforming than answers.
 - Hospitality and Physical Space
- **Six Conversations:** **Invitation,** Possibility, Ownership, Dissent, Commitment, Gifts.

Operating Guidelines

2:25 start

- Social fabric is created one room at a time, the one we are in at the moment.
- It is formed out of the questions "Whom do we want in the room?" and "What is the new conversation that we want to occur?" The key to a new future is to focus on gifts, on associational life, and on the insight that all transformation occurs through language.
- Each step has to embody a quality of aliveness, and strategy evolve in an organic way.
- The essence of creating an alternative future comes from citizen-to-citizen engagement that constantly focuses on the well-being of the whole.
- We have all the capacity, expertise, and financial resources that an alternative future requires.
- The small group is the unit of transformation and the container for the experience of belonging.

Community and The Invitation Conversation

The Next Conversation in our OLLI course!

“Invitation is the means through which hospitality is created. It counters the conventional belief that change requires mandate or persuasion. It honors the importance of choice, the necessary condition for accountability.”

Peter Block,

Community the Structure of Belonging

The Fabric of Community, p142

Community and The Invitation Conversation, cont

- Hospitality, the welcoming of strangers is the essence of restorative community. It is generous.
- Invitation is different from mandate and persuasion, which are about changing other people.
- Real transformation occurs through choice.
- The risks of invitation:
 - They might not show up – a projection of my own doubt.
 - The fear that what I invite them to is not realistic.
 - Forcing participation will probably result limited change.

Community and The Invitation Conversation, continued

- The Radical Aspect of Invitation –
 - Genuine invitation changes our relationship with others because we come to them as equals.
 - I must be willing to take no for an answer.
- Invitation as a Way of Being –
 - A future can exist without barter or coercion.
 - It is a choice for idealism.
 - Let go of the stories of the past.
 - Continue to extend the invitation to people who decline.

Community and The Invitation Conversation, week 7?

- The Invitation List – who do we want in the room?
 - The “whole system” includes people with
 - Authority to act (decision makers)
 - Resources (contacts, time, money)
 - Expertise in the area
 - Unique information
 - A stake in the outcome.
 - Different backgrounds, sectors, classes.
- The decision about who to invite is an act of leadership that carries a message.
- People who are needed will not be in the room. It still means that whoever shows up are the right people.

Constructing the Invitation, week 7?

- The elements of a powerful invitation:
 - Name the possibility about which we are convening.
 - Specify what is required of each should they choose to attend.
 - Make the invitation as personal as possible.
 - Be clear that a refusal carries no cost
 - Invite people who are not used to being together.

Constructed Conversation Practice

2:35 start

Process:

- Break into groups of 3 (speaker, listener, witness)
- Be conscious about time while in class to give each person equal airtime
- Speaker: Choose one question to answer in 3-5 minutes
- Listener: Use open questions like Why was that important to you? Tell me more?
- Switch roles
- Thank you for sharing!

Invitation, Round 1

- What do you have to let go of to bring yourself fully present here – now?
- Why was it important to you to be here today?
- What needs to shift in you before you walk into the space – to live in invitation (bring your best self)?

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- Roles: Speaker, Listener
 - It is not our job to fix, advise, rescue or save another adult without their consent. Probe with, “Why is that important to you?” and “Tell me more.”
 - The speaker is the expert in their experiences.

Share Back –
What stood out
for you in this
conversation?



Invitation, Round 2

- What do you have to let go of to bring yourself fully present here – now?
- Why was it important to you to be here today?
- What needs to shift in you before you walk into the space – to live in invitation (bring your best self)?

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- Roles: Speaker, Listener
 - It is not our job to fix, advise, rescue or save another adult without their consent. Probe with, “Why is that important to you?” and “Tell me more.”
 - The speaker is the expert in their experiences.

Share Back –
What stood out
for you in this
conversation
this time?



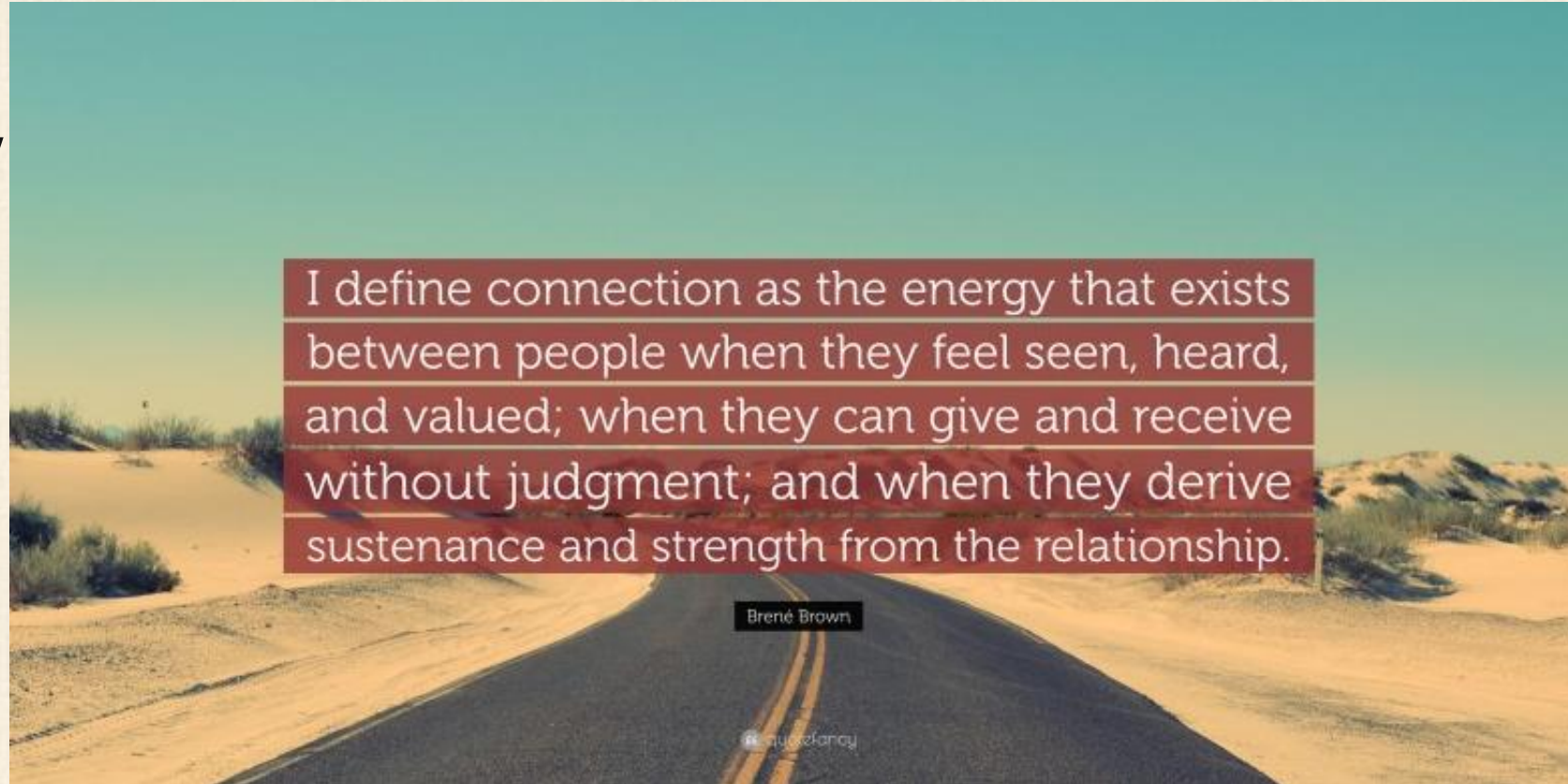
What you do makes a difference,
and you have to decide what kind
of difference you want to make.

Jane Goodall

quotefancy

- What has someone in your group done, in this gathering, that has touched you?
- Accept the gift, respond with “Thank you, I like hearing that”
- Share back in the large group how you felt or what you noticed.

Share Back –
What stood out for
you in this
conversation? How
do you feel?



Questions/Feedback?

**Who am I expecting to
do this work, if not me?**

Luvvie Ajayi Jones