

# Hitched Together

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This week our group held a one-on-one break out session during which we divided into pairs and chose questions from a list to discuss. An unexpected outcome arose from this exercise: by drawing closer to an individual person, our group as a whole seemed to draw closer. I'm curious as to how this happened and what we can learn about community building from this experience.

Early on in my one-on-one, I sensed a shift from consciously focusing on the conversation to fully immersing in it. We entered a flow, sharing and receiving with open hearts and, in doing so, expanding what felt safe to share in that space. I felt revelation, curiosity, resonance, and connection.

Once we regrouped, we took a moment to share our thoughts about the experience. Despite having several options, many pairs explored the same few questions. ("What was one important thing you received from your parents?" and "What do you spend the most time thinking about?" were popular). While I'm sure pairs shared different stories, each pair seemed to find a sense of connection, expand comfort zones, and offer what needed to be shared.

The fact that sharing different stories with different people could leave us with a similar felt experience helped me connect to people in the group who were not my one-on-one partner. Somehow, we all shared something even though much of our time was spent with only one other person. This reminded me of a John Muir quote: "When I try to pick out anything by itself, I find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Even when we split into pairs, we were still "hitched" to our other group members.

The abundance of connection defied the scarcity stories I often tell myself. In the past, I've felt that by drawing closer to one person, I'm drawing away from another. Sometimes this stems from a feeling of "time scarcity." If I make time to get together with one person, I'm not making time for another person. At other times this stems from "energy scarcity." If I only have the energy to share a story once, then only one person will connect with me through that story. The story is "all used up."

I discovered that the stories we haven't heard yet can still connect us if, as a group, we celebrate that they have been shared and received. By opening ourselves to the possibility of deep connection with one person, we created the same potential for future connections.

As I continue to read *Emergent Strategy* by Adrienne Maree Brown, I wonder how this theory scales up. Brown likens our world to a huge fractal in which the world is a reflection of the health of each community and of each individual relationship. If the connections we formed with one individual were able to bring the Young Adult Group closer, did that ripple outward into communities outside our group to which we are also "hitched?" Each time we gather, do we somehow help the world draw the tiniest bit closer to "beloved community?"