

12 neighbors Discussion Guide

Week Five : Creating Context for Community

Pre-Film Question

Have you ever come across a need, or seen someone in need, and wanted to help, but felt ill-equipped to help, and/or just didn't know what to do, or felt like it wasn't your place to help?

- What are the pros/cons of engaging in needs as individuals as we see them, vs doing things together as a community in a structured context?

As you watch the film, think about this question: In responding to a need in our community, how can we learn to create a context so that we can be legitimately involved with the people in need, and activate all of the strengths and talents of our community to help?

Watch the "Create Context for Community" episodes 5A + 5B

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss any initial thoughts, impressions, or takeaways from the film?
2. Looking at TK's process, he started by seeing the need of the children living on the streets, and then one day turned his car around, which was just the starting point. What are some principles he followed in order to create a context for community with the kids he saw on the street?

TK's process:

- (a) *Seeing the Need:* Tk, "So one day I was just returning from dropping my brother off at the bus station, and when I got here I realized there were some kids laying next to this wall by the mall. And, when I saw them I was a bit conflicted...I wasn't sure what to do."
- (b) *Taking the First Step:* Tk turned his car around and started a conversation / listening / learning..
- (c) *Started the Relationship/Building Trust:* Tk, "I decided every weekend I would make some rice and come hang out with them on the streets...I made a promise to myself that I would be consistent – show up every weekend - even if they don't talk to me."
- (d) *Looked at his context and resources and began **building a context for community with the kids and his students:*** Tk, "At the time I started working at Ashesi University, and I had all these students coming into my office talking about being the next generation of leaders in Africa looking to transform the continent ...it was all in the classroom. Why don't I challenge these students to step into places where there are no answers, into places where it is not comfortable to be a leader."
- (e) *Created Futher Context:* Tk, "The students created arts and crafts, literacy and sports programs", to further create a legitimate context for community with the kids on the streets.

3. After seeing the kids on the street TK said, "I went back to where the kids were. And as I drove closer my heart started beating faster... I didn't know what questions to ask them." Have you ever had a similar experience of wanting to help but being overcome by fear and discomfort? How do you overcome fear and discomfort?

Nikki says, "What I've experienced in my own life, is that you have to embrace that discomfort of leaving your area of expertise, your comfort zone, and you have to be brave enough to go beyond whatever that physical or mental barrier is to get to where the other people are."

4. Dr. Derenda, in speaking about helping foster children, and aging/seniors said, "I saw that it was the community that heals". What are all the benefits of partnering with other people in community to address each other's needs?

Consider discussing (a) The power of bringing the gifts of an entire, diverse team to address a need together and also how a context helps you share the work, have healthy boundaries, and avoid burnout.

5. Sometimes it is important to create your own initiative, as FOA and Bridge Meadows did, other times it is important to partner with existing initiatives. How do you discern when it is best to create a new context, or partner with an existing group?
6. Some contexts might be elaborate and require lots of resources, and others might be simpler forms. As a group, brainstorm some simple forms of community that could be initiated by even two or three friends.

Assessment

Suppose you were to create a new context with your 12 Neighbors group. What unique skills would you be passionate about bringing to such a group? What boundaries or limitations should you keep in mind to remain healthy and avoid burnout?

Action

Identify some needs in your community that your 12 Neighbors group is passionate about helping with. Brainstorm as a group and make a list of possible initiatives you could create, and also identify some existing initiatives in your community that you think you could learn from. Two weeks from now is your "action weekend." Discuss and plan as a team what activity you will do for your action weekend. Choose a few options and prioritize them in order of preference. Then, assign team members to contact the organizations, starting with your first choice, to see if they are interested in having your team join them and learn from them for your activity week/weekend.