

Dan: Okay. Well, welcome to the Reboot Podcast. We have a little different, episode and conversation for you today. We're really excited about what we're gonna be discussing. We're gonna be talking about peer groups and how you might start or create your own peer group.

Dan: When we launched Reboot way back when, we had a vision to create supportive spaces for our community, a space where peers could come together to be heard, to be supported, to be encouraged in their own growth, in their own journey. And for Reboot initially when we started it, we wanted to extend the experience our participants had in our bootcamps, a space where they all came together in person, developed these really rich connections, but then would scatter again across the country. And we wanted to create a space where they could stay connected and stay connected to that experience. So, we launched our groups virtually initially.

Dan: And, uh, for me, when we launched Reboot and thought about peer groups, it was actually really personal. I... When I, look back to my early college years, mid- mid-college years, and had started a business and just happened to create a small little peer group that, uh, was with other entrepreneurs in the area... And we came together to learn about business and to support one another's businesses, but what actually ended up happening for me was they were there for me when my mom got sick and when my mom died. And so, I learned firsthand what it was like to be supported by peers and how important it was to have a space t- you could turn to to be heard, to be felt, to be seen.

Dan: So, when we had the chance to create something in Reboot, I couldn't pass it up. And we've spent the last four years experimenting, refining our process to create these safe, trusted, virtual spaces. And in a crazy time like this, we could all use a space to turn to.

Dan: So, what we're doing today is actually sharing with all of you all that we've learned and all that you might need to create your own space, whether that be with your team or with your community or with your peers, with your family. And actually, we've been in the process long before all the craziness happened of, of capturing all of our lessons and putting it in a document to release to the world because we wanna see more of this work in the world. So, we are here today to share what we've learned with you.

Dan: And I'm really excited to welcome some of our best, uh, Reboot Circle creators and facilitators that are sitting here with me. So, I'm happy to introduce Carl, Chris, and Andy. Carl, why don't you start us?

Carl Baccellier...: All right. I'm Carl Baccellieri. I started with Reboot, um, doing these circles about two and a half years ago, and it was a life-changing experience for me. I think partly stepping into the Reboot way of really inviting authenticity and understanding that my authenticity as a facilitator is the prerequisite for

creating the kind of authenticity in the circle that's needed. So, um, I work as a, um, executive coach individually, and I host these Circles for Reboot and, and beyond.

Dan: Thanks for being here, Carl.

Carl Baccellier...: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan: Andy.

Andy Crissinger: Hi, my name's Andy Crissinger. I'm the director of coaching at Reboot, and my first role at Reboot, um, joined shortly after the company was founded, uh, was to help, uh, partner with Dan in designing, um, what would become, uh, ultimately, our Circles, uh, program. And prior to becoming a coach and finding my way into the world of tech startups, uh, I was in ministry. And one of my roles in pastoral ministry for a number of years was, um, supporting, creating, and training leaders of small groups within, um, a faith-based, uh, context. And so, I've thought a lot about peer groups and their benefit in a lot of different contexts, both professional and, um, religious/spiritual contexts and, um, believe very much in the power of small group support in, um, helping people in a number of different ways.

Dan: Thank you, Andy. Chris.

Chris Vandenberg...: Yeah, my name is Chris Vandenberg, and I'm a, a coach and a facilitator at Reboot and have also been running the Circles program that we're gonna be talking about today. And when I came in about three and a half, four years ago, I started working with, Dan and Andy, who had created this really amazing product, this really amazing experience called Circles that was already up and running. And I, I took my experience, uh, in architecture, uh, in creating really safe spaces for people to live and work and, and have shepherded it. I don't think of it as, uh, additional building, but as shepherding kinda this, this way of being with other people, um, and have learned a lot. And I'm really excited about being here today.

Dan: So, why don't we start at the... start at the top? What, what is a peer group? What is a peer group, really?

Chris Vandenberg...: Yeah, such a good question. And I'm just gonna underline and add a word here which is at the core of what Reboot is, which is coaching. So, there's peer groups and there's peer coaching groups. And a peer coaching group, which is what we would kinda think of when we're thinking of Circles, is an intentional learning experience bringing together people who are wanting to move in a direction in their work and life, right? And often to a different direction that is more in alignment with who they are at their core, right? And in it we're leveraging the power of peerness. When you think of the word peer or peerness, what we're, what we're talking about is people who have a certain likeness or sameness that

is important to them, right? So, perhaps they're, they're all entrepreneurs who understand the challenges of what it means to start your own company with your own idea, right? And in that likeness and sameness, there's a, a shared experience that perhaps not everyone else understands.

Dan: Mmm.

Chris Vandenberg...: Um, and then there's another part to this, which is the coaching aspect. And the coaching aspect is... stands in contrast to other types of modalities of support. One that, um, I'm just gonna name right now is problem solving, right? Problem solving is a huge part of a lot of different modalities, and some that you might think of are mastermind groups or even teaching groups in which there is an expert or someone who has the answer to the problem outside of yourself. And coaching starts from a slightly different standpoint, which is that the answer is not outside of ourselves, but it's actually within ourselves.

Chris Vandenberg...: And from that assumption, a coaching engagement is one in which we leverage skills like listening and curiosity in order to help the person that we're there in support of find their own answer.

Chris Vandenberg...: And so, when we combine these two words, the peer and the coaching, what we're left with is a group of people who understand each other's challenges that aren't there to fix or solve anybody or anything, but to really lean into deep listening, creating trust and rapport to help others in the group find their own answers, and in turn to be helped, right?

Dan: Carl and I were, uh, together in a Circle earlier today, and in a time like this, there are no answers for this.

Chris Vandenberg...: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Carl Baccellier...: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan: It's nothing but uncertainty and questions, and... But just the, the, the space to be together and... I think the word that was used was community, just to be together in community in, community in our sense of humanity. We... We're all humans in this time of uncertainty, and it just feels good to be together. There's no problems to solve, 'cause they're not... We can't solve the problems we're facing, but we can be together. There's, there's just a richness in that.

Carl Baccellier...: Yeah. When I think about what you just said, Chris, in terms of facilitation of a coached facilitation of a group of people that are peers coming together and they're... not to problem solve, um, there's, there's a, a creating of a kind of atmosphere of trust and authenticity that's not coming from the coach, but the coach's role is to help cultivate the skill set. And it's interesting to... You, you mentioned leveraging the skill sets of curiosity and listening. And we often think, "Oh, I know how to be curious. I know how to listen," you know. But to actually

create an atmosphere where, where everybody's focusing those capacities together and creating a kind of holding space where people get to experience that coming from all directions. And I think that's... that starts to get into what occ- what happens inside of a coached peer environment.

Chris Vandenberg...: You know, it reminds me of one of the pre-reads that we send out to participants that are coming into this group and don't know exactly what it's all about. And Andy, I... You were mentioning this before our call. Love for you to, like, share a little bit about that.

Andy Crissinger: Yeah, thanks, Chris. Um, one of the books that, um, that has been instrumental for us in, in just thinking about our approach to peer groups and our approach to a particular kind of conversation, uh, uh, dialogue, uh, in s-, uh, in particular, with peer groups is this book called *Dialogue and The Art of Thinking Together* by a gentleman named William Isaacs who teaches at the Sloan School at MIT. Uh, just a brilliant book that examines the various components of dialogue, how dialogue emerges and works, uh, in effective ways with groups of people.

Andy Crissinger: And he has this section of the book that we, um, historically have had new participants in Circles read, um, as a, as a pre-read. And he's talking about the increasing complexity of challenges that we face, particularly in a, in a, in a work context, um, in the, the age that we're living in. And, um, I'll just pick it up here. He says:

Andy Crissinger: "These are not individual problems. To the extent that we insist on dealing with them alone, I suspect that as individuals we shall feel more and more pressured and isolated. Many of us in the United States are in the habit of valuing the self-sufficiency of the rugged individual. It's true that the individual does count, and I'm responsible for myself. But the issues human beings now face go beyond solutions that any of us can conjure up. We need to make a collective shift as well as an individual one. This means learning to think with others and not merely on our own."

Andy Crissinger: And if that doesn't resonate-

Dan: Hmm.

Andy Crissinger: ... in the present moment (laughs) I'm not sure-

Carl Baccellier...: (laughs).

Andy Crissinger: ... uh, I'm not sure what does. I mean, the e-, you know, we are facing, uh, collectively a challenge that is bigger than any one of us as individuals, and we need each other.

Andy Crissinger: And Isaacs goes on to offer a really powerful metaphor, and it's the metaphor of emperor penguins who, uh, when they're facing, you know, f- uh, fifty degrees

below zero fahrenheit temperatures in An- in Antarctica, they form, uh, circles to retain heat. And they rotate so that no one bird is exposed to the wind for too long. And he goes on to say br-, uh, Isaacs goes on to say:

Andy Crissinger: "This is an apt metaphor for the power of dialogue. How can we deal with the cold and challenging winds of change. I will suggest we might do the same by engaging in dialogue in our organizations and communities that generate the resilience we need."

Andy Crissinger: And so, it's just a really beautiful and powerful metaphor for the ways that peer groups, intentional peer groups, can be a support for us during times of... not, not just great change, uh, but right now, just unprecedented, um, circumstances that none of us have, have, have lived through, um, before and, and it's almost sort of like from, fr- something from a bad dream. Um, but nevertheless, here we are.

Andy Crissinger: And as Dan was saying earlier, while we can't, uh... none of us as individuals can, can change the situation right now, we do have agency. And these groups can help us see where we have agency and see what we can do. And, uh, we don't have to do that alone.

Dan: Yeah. There's a power in coming together and being supported.

Andy Crissinger: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan: And wh-... So, when we think about these groups and... the peer groups, what, what are they for? Now, we've spoken to this a bit, but what, what is the peer group for?

Chris Vandembri...: Yeah, another good question. It feel- it feels like we've started to answer that a little bit, um, and I think that every individual probably has a... their version of that answer when they come to these circles, like why they are coming, coming to them.

Dan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chris Vandembri...: And I think the way that we would answer that question is that they're really for are for people who are looking for a different way of solving their own problems and challenges, right?

Dan: Mmm.

Chris Vandembri...: And different compared to what? Compared to perhaps how they've been socialized, uh, to learn in school or in work where there is a quote/unquote "right" answer. And in contrast to that, these, these peer groups are for people who recognize that there's not a right answer outside of themselves, but there is an inner answer that perhaps they are being called to. And in that calling, it's

not just about knowing what to do, but knowing who they are and who they want to be, right? And knowing that the answer to that might not be, uh, apparent immediately and going through this process of really not knowing is the way to get to more of that understanding of who we are how we want to work and live in this world.

Andy Crissinger: Just to build on that slightly, um, there's a phrase that we've often, um, used throughout Reboot, uh, to describe the kind of, um, the work of self-actualization, um, but then also the need for community in doing that work.

Andy Crissinger: So, we often talk about this is work... it's individual work that we can't do alone. And that's where I think peer groups can, uh, really shine. It's the, the individual work of self-actualization, you know, like what Jerry talks about in his book, the, the art of growing up, uh, the art of understanding our personal histories and the patterns that have been present, some that have served us and many of which, uh, have ceased to serve us.

Andy Crissinger: That kind of work we have to do individually, and yet we need to do it in community. We need the safety, the support, the mirroring of blind spots, all the things that are provided by a trusted group of peers. And so, um, it's not for... so that those peers can tell us what to do or solve our problems for us, but to create the conditions that will allow us to discover those things on our own.

Dan: Yeah. And we, and we've all been, uh, fortunate to have facilitated a number of these groups. And Chris, you referenced that, uh, what is it for is often it can be answered a little differently for every participant. And I'd just be curious to hear from the three of you, um, I'm happy to chime in as well, but what are some of the answers to tho- that question you've seen for, for participants? And how have they used the peer groups and what, what, what are some stories that you can share to help people kind of put themselves in the position of participant and how it can be helpful for them?

Carl Baccellier...: Hmm. You know, one thing that comes to mind then when I frame the coaching journey and the peer coached journey, uh, to folks in the beginning of a Circle I'll often say, "One of the things that we're working on here is creating a space where the experiences that we have at work become the opportunities for growth that we can process in the Circle," that you, you... In the, in... There's a great advantage to having this combination of a, of a community of people where we... I can do psychological work and then actually have something to work on.

Carl Baccellier...: Like, like, there's so much that comes at, at you as a leader. You, you wanna talk about being exposed and having your blinds- your blind spots, you know, pointed out to you and wanting to do something different and not knowing how. Um, so to be able to bring the challenges, that's, that's something I've seen people do is say, "I'm, I'm facing this situation. This person is..." I just, just had a phone call with somebody, um, saying, "I want to be able to show up kindly and

compassionately with this person, and at the same time, like, the task... their, their, their job performance, the mission has to be prioritized. And how do I do both these things?" And to be able to drop into a space and say, "Well, how, how was that handled in my family?" (laughs). "How was that handled, you know, in the, in my, in my life? How do I work with that within my own, um, circumstances?"

Carl Baccellier...: And so, to have an, to have an opportunity to process the, the challenges and the potential growth opportunities that arise in the work environment inside of a container of learning where each... where everybody around is, again, trained up to listen and be curious and trust that you've got the answer, you need the space and the time to go deep with it.

Andy Crissinger: Maybe to just, uh, ground this even further in some, some practical examples. You know, Dan, I'm thinking of the group, uh, we've affectionately referred to as the OG Reboot Circle.

Dan: Hmm.

Andy Crissinger: Uh, our very first Circle that we started, um, uh, that's made up of, uh... St- they're still meeting. Dan still facilitates the group. They're, um... It's made up of people who've attended our bootcamps, um, several different bootcamps over the years and, uh, this group still meets together. They've been together for over three years now.

Dan: Yeah.

Andy Crissinger: And, um, one of the things that I think about when I think about that group is how four out of five of the longtime participants of that group over the span of about two years, um, exited their companies. And each one of those exits was, uh, different. I mean, some of them were favorable, some of them were, you know, um, maybe not so favorable. Um, and while they had that commonality of being founding CEOs going through, um, exit processes with their businesses, for each one of them, even the favorable exits, like, really tested their mettle as individuals. And there was no playbook. There was no right way (laughs).

Dan: Hmm.

Andy Crissinger: Um, each of their experiences was unique and different. And there was enough sameness and peerness, as Chris was talking about earlier, for them to really empathize and be there with one another. But then there was also, uh, this amazing recognition that, that each person was going through, um, their own journey. And, um, what they didn't need was to be lectured to or said, "Hey, here's how you c- you have to do this." What, what they needed was space to process-

Dan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Andy Crissinger: ... because the growing up invitation that was there for each of them was, was u- unique.

Dan: Yeah.

Andy Crissinger: And, um, so that's just the way that, you know, gr-, uh, a very practical way that we've seen groups be supportive, um, for folks who are going through, uh, both challenging a- and, uh, really exciting times. Um, you know, each of those, or all of those circumstances provide an opportunity to grow and do, uh-

Dan: Yeah-

Andy Crissinger: ... interior work.

Dan: Yeah, absolutely. That, that, that group has been fun to be a part of, to see their, their journey and their growth. Um, we had a conversation this week, even. Not only are you, you know, i- i- held in a way that supports your own growth and your own self-discovery, but you're also, uh, as you, you create these spaces of trust, you get to really be known by your participants, your fellow participants in a way where perhaps, you know, things in your blind spots can be reflected to you time and time again.

Dan: So, even this week, um, one of the participants was just sharing how they were feeling around this time, and the group knows this person very well and kind of jokingly refle- reflected back to them, like, "Yeah, that's right. You are a wartime CEO. This is a kinda what you live for." And, and this participant was able to sort of laugh and realize, "Oh my gosh. Yes. That is, that is kind of what I live for (laughs). No wonder I'm feeling so on- online and ready to go right now." 'Cause they had come to know this person over the last three or four years in a really intimate way. And I've seen countless examples of where, uh, things that we personally can't see are, are so visible to those around us who know us well and who care for us and a peer group can be a space where that can be reflected in a really loving and supportive way, in a way that's supportive of growth as well.

Chris Vandembri...: I love that story, and I might add to it too as to the, the question earlier about what brings people to these groups. And, you know, as you all know, we do a, a intake call with everyone to understand what, what is it that they're hoping to get out of these and why are they really coming. And oftentimes people will say, um, "You know, I'm here because I want to develop as a leader. I want to grow." "I want to build resilience" is one thing I hear a lot.

Dan: Hmm.

Chris Vandembri...: And what I, what I always ask them, um, or what I come to find out in asking them questions, is the thing that seems to draw them and why they're here in the Reboot way or in these peer coaching group way is they're... they



understand the connection between their internal patterns of behavior affecting how they show up in their companies and in their lives. And they want to be held in a place where they can really understand and be asked questions and go further into that journey of self-discovery and, and radical self-inquiry as we say here, right?

Dan: Mmm.

Chris Vandenberg...: And for an example that, that comes to mind, I'll... There's a, a group that I started with probably three years ago, like, one of the first groups I started with when I, when I came on to the Circles team. And one of the members there was the CEO of a company. And I'll never forget, like, how he reacted to one of his first challenges that he brought to the group, which was a CTO, an engineering leader in his organization that he wasn't sure was the right person for the job, but he was torn up inside about what to do about it, right?

Dan: Mmm.

Chris Vandenberg...: About should I... Like, do I need to coach this person? Do I need to have a conversation? Is it someone I need to let go? Like, really didn't have the, the, the tools yet in their journey as a CEO to know what to do in that situation. And it created an environment that eventually led to a, a really unfortunate mistake for that company that was like a, you know, a six-figure, multiple six-figures mistake.

Dan: Hmm.

Chris Vandenberg...: And his group was there to support him through that, to help him lean into what his gut had kind of known beforehand and make a change in the engineering org that was super painful.

Chris Vandenberg...: And I remember having an offline conversation with this, with this CEO where he was like, "I just can't do it. I can't, I can't keep going, you know? I don't want to, um, I don't want to continue on if it's gonna be through this mistake." But he stuck in the saddle, and the group was there.

Chris Vandenberg...: And thinking about how he's changed over those three years, and now they've made it through that, that mistake, and he's got an executive team that he feels really good about. And the resilience that he's built throughout by kind of working through some... what you might see now as smaller challenges, but building the resilience over time is just really quite astounding.

Dan: I love that story. I love it. And maybe, maybe before moving on, just to summarize, like, what is a peer group for, it's a space to, to be connected, to be heard, to be loved, to be supported, um, by peers and those who can come to know you and know you well. Uh, people who can reflect your blind spots and, and can support you through challenging times and exciting times. And we're,

we're stronger together, as the penguins, uh, example shows. In fact, you could say that the penguins are... can't survive those conditions without one another, without being together.

Chris Vandenberg...: Hmm.

Dan: And so there... these are spaces to be stronger together on our individual work that can't be done alone.

Carl Baccellier...: Yeah.

Dan: And why, why do we think, you know, why release this podcast now? Why release all this information? Why, why do we see peer groups as really important for us all to do right now?

Andy Crissinger: Well, the obvious answer right now is that we're all experiencing, uh, a global, uh, catastrophe that, uh, that in order to deal with it effectively requires, um, a form of physical distancing, which means we're, uh, we're actually having to be apart from each other physically in ways that, um, uh, are unan- unnatural to the human experience. And so how much more now do we need, uh, to be intentionally coming together? And thankfully, technology can support that. I mean, we, we've, we've seen the, the power of, you know, something like video conferencing, uh, in supporting, uh, peer groups, uh, even before this, uh, this catastrophe came upon us. But how much more now, um, do we need to be leaning on, on those capabilities and coming together in intentional ways.

Carl Baccellier...: And it makes me think too of there's, there's in- positive intention and there's a desire to come together, and then there's the question of how do we do that really skillfully? How do, how do we take the... when we're taking the time and making the commitment and getting people together, how do we share what we've learned at Reboot to help people be as effective as that at... at that as possible? Um, you know, as we all know, the, the Reboot formula is practical skills plus radical self-inquiry plus shared experiences equals enhanced leadership and greater resiliency.

Dan: Hmm.

Carl Baccellier...: And that practical skills part, like even, Chris, when you were talking about, you know, that, that, that person was learning, like, their hard lesson in the, in the workplace. And the... What are the skills inside of the participants, inside of the Circles, that helps it so that when you're the one who's being circled, so that when you're the penguin receiving the warmth, that it actually is warmth, and it's not people, um, you know, inte- with good intentions giving you advice? Or, you know, otherwise trying to problem solve your situation?

Carl Baccellier...: But there's actually a skills involved in being able to stay and ask open, honest questions and stay curious and, and orient somebody towards the answer that

they're holding within themselves. Um, that, that's a, that's a learned skill, and so it's part of it, I think, of what makes a, a coached peer group different is that we're actually onboarding these skills. We're, we're teaching them, we're practicing them together, and we have interesting and, I think, some cool formats to share about how to even do that, that I'm sure is in the document that we're... that's gonna go out.

Carl Baccellier...: Um, but having, having the... a, a field of people where the, where the skills have been seeded and people get to actually practice... So, if you're the person who's circling somebody else, you're not passive. You're actively practicing the skills that you know are helpful because you've been on the receiving end of it. And that, that sort of just nourishes the whole conversation.

Chris Vandenberg...: Mmm. Yeah, and, and creates a really safe space where it's okay and actually part of the format to not have the answer.

Dan: Hmm.

Chris Vandenberg...: And Dan, to your question, I think that's why now is I think we need... we all need that more than ever.

Dan: Yeah. Early... Early in my facilitating career, um, I was facilitating a group of investors who bring the, bring forth their challenges just like every one of us. And there was a moment where we did a check-in, which we'll speak to in a minute, um, where each check-in, which was each participant just sharing a really hard situation in their life. There was partnership struggles, there was marriage struggles, there was business struggles, there was personal health struggles, just things that, that there simply was no solution. And there was a heaviness in the sharing, but there was also this warmth in the connection and the reminder that we're not alone in our humanity. We're not alone in our struggles, in our victories. We're, we're actually part of a, a community.

Dan: And there was no solutions offered in that, but there was this weight that was lifted just to have a space to turn to and to share and to be heard. And I think that, as you all have spoken to, we're in a time now where there are no clear solutions. There might be solutions for our specific challenges in our lives and our businesses, but there aren't solutions that we can contribute to immediately to the challenges we're facing. But we can connect on the, on the struggle and the, the fear and the doubt and the anxiety. Um, and so it's really important to have a space like that. It's, it's our, our shielding from the, the, the cold, the arctic cold.

Chris Vandenberg...: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dan: So, if we were, you know, if you were to imagine the, uh, somebody sitting there listening to this and saying, "Okay, I get it. I wanna do it. Um, you know, I want, I wanna create a group for my peers or I wanna create a group for my team. I

wanna create a group for my family or my community." How can we support them in getting started? I know we're gonna be releasing documentation, but what could we offer them now?

Chris Vandenberg: Yeah, um, so I think the, the first thing that I would offer is that it... all, all it takes is a Zoom account or some other virtual platform for meeting with people.

Chris Vandenberg: And you can create a place where people can come together and support each other. Um, and there's some other ingredients that are important to, to bring to that gathering, but it really doesn't take much, as I'm sure we've all realized, uh, in this time is the, the, the power of the virtual connection and how it can create connec-, uh, create, um, a place for us to come together as humans.

Chris Vandenberg: After you've gotten that Zoom set up, then it might be helpful to name that we're all coming together in alignment or service of supporting each other, right? And the way that we at Reboot think about that is we, we meet, uh, every other, other week or twice a month for these virtual sessions in which we, we hold these Circles.

Chris Vandenberg: And so, when you're coming together and creating a session, there are some things that are really important that help create the space for this work to happen.

Chris Vandenberg: And the first thing is a proper check-in. We use a format called Red-Yellow-Green, and it's a stoplight metaphor where we invite the people, the participants, to check in, uh, either as a color or a combination of colors, right? So, green is feeling very resourced, I'm fully online, all the way to red, which is I'm really triggered and perhaps need some support.

Chris Vandenberg: And the check-in does a few things. One, it allows us to switch contexts from whatever we were doing before to fully arrive into what we're doing now, right? So, it gives our, our systems, our human operating systems, a, a moment to catch up. It also helps us to kind of name the feelings and emotions and thoughts that are happening internally, to name them externally, so that we can put them out there, right?

Chris Vandenberg: Another really helpful consequence of doing that for other people in the group is that, number one, we know how everyone else is doing and what they're bringing into the room, right, or into the virtual room. And for the parts of ourselves that are perhaps tracking others... Uh, you might kind of think of a, a meeting with your boss, for instance, right, where you come into a room and start to notice that, uh, the boss might be nervous or moving quickly or cr-, uh, not as settled as you're used to them. Well, our brain tends to make meaning of that movement or that behavior of others. And the meaning is not always favorable for us, right? We can make it about us, like something that we did or didn't do. And this happening all under the surface. We're not even aware that

this happening, but we might... what we might be aware of is that we're feeling a little bit more anxious.

Chris Vandenberg: And so, that check-in, both for ourselves and hearing from others, helps that meaning-making part of our brain calm down, right, so that we know it's not just about us or it's not about us.

Andy Crissinger: The one thing I'd say is just, um, you know, the, the idea is you, you get to hear everybody's voice, uh, for a brief moment at the beginning of the meeting, uh, before you move on. And so, it's a little bit of a ritual, a ritualized beginning that can sort of help you, uh, denote this is a different way of being with each other, and we're gonna let everybody speak, name where they are. It doesn't have to be long, but we've heard everyone's voice, and then we'll move on to, uh, whatever we al- whatever else we have on the agenda for that session today. So, think of it as an opening ritual that can really set the, set the tone for the meeting.

Carl Baccellier...: And in, and in terms of that tone, I think that, Dan, you mentioned this i- this experience of a non-transactional kind of space, I think. I was, I was on a call recently with somebody who was exploring whether a circle was right for them. This is a person who is an investor and has led several companies, and said he, when he, when he stopped to think about the last time that he hung out with people and just spent time in a way that they weren't trying to get something from him-

Dan: Hmm.

Carl Baccellier...: ... whether in terms of what he was putting out or, or investing in, was college. Like, the... Like, he actually just wanted to be in (laughs) a space where it was not fundamentally transactional.

Dan: Hmm.

Carl Baccellier...: And I think the Red Yellow Green does that-

Dan: Hmm.

Carl Baccellier...: ... really well too.

Dan: Yeah, and, and we're... In the community that we're working with, it's generally... they're very oriented towards problem-solving.

Carl Baccellier...: Hmm.

Dan: And so even just the Red Yellow Green is the, the, the transition from problem-solving mode to just listening mode-

Carl Baccellier...: Hmm.

Dan: ... 'cause you, you're not there to turn somebody who's red to green. It's not the goal. The goal is for each of you to check in with where you are and for others to know where you are and to know that you're together in that.

Dan: So, so we do the check-in, Chris, and then what?

Chris Vandembri...: Yeah, and, uh, what we've all been talking about leads really nicely into the second part that's really important, which is what we call creating the container.

Chris Vandembri...: And if you think about a container, and the example I always use is a glass of water, right, where the glass is the container and the water is the content. And depending on how big that glass is and what materiality is, that will determine, those characteristics will determine, what can be held and how the content will change and shift, right, when it's in the, in the container.

Chris Vandembri...: In these groups, what the container is a little bit more of a translation, is it's the expected norms and behaviors of how we act together, right? And so, Carl, when you were just saying it's not transactional, right, that starts to create a little bit of the, the container, 'cause we know that we're not here to get something or solve something from somebody else.

Chris Vandembri...: And we have found it really useful to, to name what those behaviors are at the beginning of, uh, an engagement or a session because it lets people set their own expectations of what is appropriate behavior and what might be outside of the bounds. For them to feel really safe in showing up and being held and not having their, their s- their problems solved or fixed and also for the ones that are supporting to know when they might get outside of the bounds of the container, right, and to have a diagnostic to come back to center and wonder, "Hmm. I think maybe I'm trying to solve this problem rather than getting really curious and listening," which is one of the, the guidelines that sets the container for our Reboot Circles, really listening to the essence and the core of what this human being in front of me is sharing, right?

Dan: This can be challenging, I guess, virtually, but to set the container, to recognize that we are now moving into this work, so you may... Uh, often in these Circles calls them... Carl, we just came through one, everyone that's coming on, they joined the call, and it's, it's... it can be playful or whatever what might be there, just sort of reconnecting. But then it's important to, to have a clear delineation, we are now beginning. We are now entering this work together. We're gonna start it with a check-in or whatever you may start it with. Uh, it's important to have that clear marker so we know that we're now orienting around this way of being together.

Dan: So, you, you do the check-in and the container, and then, um, what is brought into the container?

Chris Vandenberg...: Yeah, and then, and then the, the perhaps last or maybe most important part is the ability to bring forth a challenge to the group, right? And challenge makes it sound like it, it's, um, maybe something that is, is anxiety producing or, or wrong or, or not okay. But it doesn't just have to be that sort of challenge. It might just be an issue that you're dealing with or something that has been on your mind that, um, hasn't been able to, to move through you or been... or hasn't been processed, right?

Chris Vandenberg...: And setting the expectations that we're here to bring forth what's going on for us as a challenge creates the conditions for that inner work to happen, right? And when set against the backdrop of, uh, a container that has some, some boundaries of how we know how to engage and, and behave creates a really safe space where we know that we can just show up, right, and that we'll be supported.

Chris Vandenberg...: So, it's a really potent combination to have check-ins, the container that let people know how they can engage, and then the opportunity to bring forth a challenge.

Dan: Thank you for that, Chris. And, and I just would add that to, to close the container, it's also helpful to have a clear, um, or helpful ending, I guess, to acknowledge that we're now returning to our work and our lives. Um, and we've done it a number of different ways. I, I know that my personal preference is to just ask people to, to do a one-word check-out in terms of where they are.

Dan: But, I don't know, would there be others that you, you all would share in terms of what you've seen be helpful just to mark the end of this space and now our return to our work and our lives?

Andy Crissinger: Yeah, a couple things that, uh, that I've used before. Uh, one is to just ask people, particularly if there's been a discussion, uh, where we've held space for one person to work through a challenge, like what Chris was describing. You might ask people to consider their own work, their own lives, and name, uh, something that they're taking away from the discussion that's relevant to, to them. Uh, so, it's almost like, you know, what's, what's a, a, you know, a top, top takeaway for you?

Andy Crissinger: Um, the... another is to ask people to share, uh, gratitude check-outs. So, you know, what's one thing you're, um, grateful for from our discussion today? And, um, closing with gratitude, uh, can just be a wonderful way to leave people in a very resourced place. Um, 'cause when we are disciplined to name what we're grateful for, we are calling attention to what we have, as opposed to what we don't have. We're looking at, um, uh, you know, we're actually paying attention

to our own agency and, um, uh, and resour- and, uh, re- resourced-ness. So, those would be two other options.

Dan: Yeah, thank you. I love, I love the gratitude check-out, to your point, 'cause it's, um... Sometimes we don't even give ourselves the space to just appreciate what's here and what we're experiencing or who we have in our lives. So, just really nice to have that reminder.

Dan: So, before we wrap, um, and, and keep in mind we will be releasing a lot of, uh, more information that will be supportive of anyone who might wanna create their own groups, um, but just wanted to ask you all, is there anything else that you might say, either words of encouragement or, um, words of wisdom for someone who might be sitting there thinking, "Okay, I think I wanna do this is my company or my community"? Anything you might offer them?

Chris Vandembri...: Yeah. Uh, I would say, um, lean into the difference between, um, going out and finding people that you think would be fits and instead, uh, shifting to a stance of an offering, right? An offering of what might be created or what you're thinking about creating for your company or for your friends or acquaintances or network. And then let the... those that a- find the, uh, the pull, the calling to that type of work be the juice, be the momentum that gets it going.

Dan: Mmm.

Carl Baccellier...: I might share something, um, maybe more specific to the facilitator role once things are going. And that is that the, the balance between being supportive and having this be a place that people can come and feel that respite from the winds and yet also maintain an element of challenge, 'cause there's, I think there's a lot of people that wouldn't want to just come into an environment where they were only being met and supported and encouraged, but they would also wanna be challenged. They want... They would wanna be helped to see a blind spot.

Carl Baccellier...: And so, to recognize that when, when we bring the skills onboard to... such that we're o- actually o- asking open and honest questions and so forth, that there's... we're creating the conditions to be able to challenge helpfully and not confrontationally. But that when you actually challenge somebody to look, for example, with an open and honest question like, um, "What are other people saying that you're not seeing in this situation?" I mean, that's... I mean, i-... Properly timed and in context, for example, that could be a challenging question. But you don't know the answer to it already, and it might be exactly the moment that someone needs in a safe space to actually look for the first time. So, to be challenging is supportive, and to be supportive is challenging.

Dan: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Hmm, yeah.



Andy Crissinger: But those are great. I, think the thing I'd add is, um, just do it if you feel like you want to start something and bring together a group of people and host a, a peer group. Uh, don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Um, don't worry about doing it wrong. Just put the call out there. I mean, my... what I've seen recently is that people are craving connection. And, um, so just do it. Put the call out. See who might respond, and get started.

Dan: Yeah. I would just say don't underestimate the, the power and importance of, of deeply listening and being heard. I've been continually blown away by the magic that occurs when somebody is really being heard and someone is really listening. Everyone, everyone grows and everyone connects more deeply.

Dan: Um, as I started at the beginning of this conversation, I survived a really hard time in my life with the support of peers, peers that I never anticipated being there to support in that way, but they were. And this is a really hard time, and it's really important to be with one another.

Dan: So, my encouragement, to Andy's point, would be just go do it. And know that we're releasing more information and we are here to support you however we can in this process. So, please, please reach out to us.

Dan: But I also wanna thank the three of you for coming onto this conversation and sharing your wisdom and your genius with the world and, and doing the work that you do. I'm really grateful for that.

Carl Baccellier...: Hmm. Been a pleasure.

Andy Crissinger: Yeah, thanks for bringing us together, Dan.

Chris Vandenbri...: Thank you, Dan.