



## A Human-Centered Strategy for Belonging and Inclusion

### DEI Starts With Relationship—Not Just Policy

Many corporate DEI efforts focus on compliance, training, or metrics. While these are important, **real inclusion begins with connection**. And in many workplaces today, connection is in short supply.

- **Remote and hybrid work** has reduced informal relationship-building
- **Employees are siloed** across teams, backgrounds, and identity groups
- **Fatigue and polarization** make difficult conversations harder

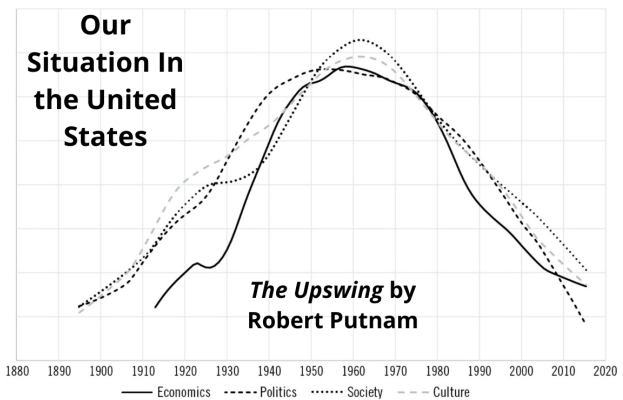
**The Potluck Project** offers a human-centered, low-barrier way to bring people together—across departments, backgrounds, and belief systems.

### The Challenges We Face Together

Across the United States, communities are facing a wave of division and disconnection that threatens both individual well-being and our shared civic health. Key challenges include:

- The rise of polarization that erodes democratic norms
- Widespread loneliness and isolation, made worse by social media and cultural fragmentation
- Increasing disparities in wealth, income, education, and human rights

These issues are deeply interconnected. Social isolation makes us more vulnerable to fear and manipulation. Polarization erodes our ability to collaborate across difference. According to the Rippel Foundation, **belonging and civic muscle are the foundation** of a society. Group-to-group and person-to-person relationships are not a nice to have, they create the possibility for everything else. The question is: how do we respond?



**Jonathan Haidt:** Vibrant Democracies have Social capital | Strong institutions | Shared stories

### A Simple Strategy to Build Belonging

This is not a workshop. It's a gathering around food and story.

Participants share a meal and tell brief personal stories based on simple prompts—no debate, no training, just the kind of human connection that makes true belonging possible.

At PTU we believe that people grow at the pace of relationship. As we become connected to one another we gain motivation to do the courageous work of addressing personal biases and interpersonal relationships as well as institutional and systemic change.

Because it starts with relationship people begin to ask for awareness and skill-building tools that DEI teams are so good at offering.

### Why It Works in Corporate Settings

- **Flexible and inclusive.** Works across cultures, roles, and identity groups
- **Low-cost and high-impact.** Can be hosted in-house with minimal resources
- **Strengthens team cohesion** and cross-departmental trust
- **Lays the foundation for deeper DEI learning and dialogue**

### What We Offer

- A free, downloadable toolkit tailored for your organizational setting
- Guidance for adapting to your workplace culture
- Optional support for cross-sector collaborations (e.g., inviting community partners to the table)
- Participation in a national network of bridge-building practitioners

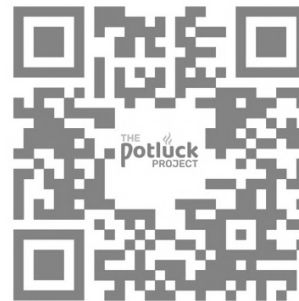
## What You Can Do

- Host a Potluck Project event in your office, campus, or retreat
- Include potlucks in DEI, ERG, or HR programming
- Use the toolkit as an onboarding or team-building tool
- Demonstrate your commitment to relational inclusion, not just policies

## PTU:

Paths to Understanding is a 501c3 working for a world in which all belong and all can thrive. We do this work in partnership with local and regional organizations in Washington State and across the nation. Our partners include secular and religious bridge building organizations and networks.

THE potluck PROJECT	
Who can host a potluck?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individuals</li><li>• Groups of Friends</li><li>• Community Groups</li><li>• Wisdom Communities or Interfaith Group</li></ul>
What do you need to get started?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 or more people ready to organize</li><li>• A date and time for your potluck</li><li>• A location to host your event</li><li>• Courage to gather with others</li></ul>
What will you find in this toolkit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sample invitation</li><li>• Pre-event press release template</li><li>• Event agenda &amp; considerations for planning an intercultural event</li><li>• Post-event press release template</li></ul>
QUESTIONS? Contact us via email   <a href="mailto:Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org">Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org</a>	



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