



# Community Over Labels – Discussion Guide

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Tags	

## Purpose

Break the "us vs them" narrative by showing how community—not individual perfection—drives lasting change. Dismantle labels and stigma with research evidence.

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**Time: 15 minutes**

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## Section 1: Mini-Lesson (8 min)

### The Science of Why Community Matters—For Everyone

**Universal truth:** No one builds alone. Peer networks, mentorship, and community support drive success in entrepreneurship, education, and life transitions.

#### The research:

- Raj Chetty's landmark 2022 study in *Nature*: Social capital—access to opportunity-rich networks—is one of the strongest predictors of economic mobility across *all* populations
- This isn't just for people in recovery. This is universal.
- Community connections drive success for everyone, not just people overcoming specific challenges.

## **Breaking the Hierarchy**

Research shows peer-led models work *better* than expert-only models because they:

- **Build trust and cultural relevance organically** — peers "get it" in ways experts don't
  - **Break down "service provider" vs "service recipient" barriers** — no more hierarchy of "fixed" vs "broken"
  - **Create sustainable, self-multiplying networks** — alumni become the infrastructure
  - **Give everyone something to offer AND something to learn** — mutual growth, not one-way rescue
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## **The Helper-Therapy Principle**

Helping others strengthens your own growth and recovery. This is backed by decades of research.

When you mentor, teach, or support someone else, *you* benefit as much as they do.

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## **Key Message**

**"Your struggles don't make you less valuable. Your experience makes you *more* valuable to someone coming up behind you."**

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## **Section 2: Group Reflection (7 min)**

### **Reflection Prompt**

**"When have you felt labeled, categorized, or put in a box? What would it mean to be seen as a builder instead?"**

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### **Process**

1. **Pair or small group sharing (5 min):** Participants discuss in pairs or groups of 3-4

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- 2. Volunteers share with full group (2 min):** Invite a few key insights to be shared
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## Facilitator Script

*"Legacy Rising rejects the us vs. them narrative completely. There are no 'fixed people' helping 'broken people.' There are only builders at different stages of the journey. Some are further ahead. Some just started. All have something to teach and learn. Your past doesn't disqualify you—it equips you."*

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## Facilitator Tips

- **Name specific labels and stigma** your participants have faced. Don't be abstract. Make it real.
  - Examples: "addict," "ex-con," "felon," "in recovery," "at-risk," "disadvantaged"
  - Ask: "What labels have been put on you? What assumptions have people made?"
  - Then dismantle those labels with evidence and dignity.
  - **Create brave space, not safe space.** Let participants name hard truths about stigma and systemic barriers.
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## Research Citations

- Chetty, R., et al. (2022). "Social Capital I: Measurement and Associations with Economic Mobility." *Nature*, 608, 108-121.
- Stanford Social Innovation Review (2020). "When Peers Work Together to Drive Social Change."
- PMC/NIH (2023). "Peer Facilitation: Accelerating Individual, Community, and Societal Change."