

# **Learnings from John Paul Lederach**

**On humanization,  
curiosity, and  
courage**



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# **The pocket guide for facing down a civil war.**

**Selected extracts, some  
shortened slightly.**

**Including page reference.**



“The quality of how we relate and stay in relationship across difference matters.

And every small act to heal our tattered social fabric matters.”

**P9**



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“Some of the most surprising processes of change came about as people tapped their own imagination and trusted their local knowledge and networks.

Start where you have access. Don't wait. Take responsibility. Create the surprise of unlikely spaces of dialogue, engagement, and joint action across divisions.”

**P15**



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“Two mindsets that inspire bold and imaginative resistance.

The first is *enough-is-enough*; the second is the *grand-mother’s imagination*.

A broad view of collective well-being that refuses to fall into the trap of dehumanisation. The daily reminder that humanity shares a common future.”

**P21/23**



“Whether we recognize it or not, breaking through the toxic polarisation and violence always requires the inner works needed to witness and stay curious about the lives of other people, especially those who we find threatening.

The unexpected practice that rises emerges from commitment to curiosity carried with patience and embodied in the discipline of listening to understand.”

**P30/31**



“Under threat we feel a need to talk with those who *feel* our threat. The impact is we talk more and more *about* those we do not like and less and less *with* them.

Many places use a phrase to describe early work to halt patterns of harm: *We started with good neighborliness.*

Stay in relationship with people even when you disagree.”

**P41/46**



“Start small. Start local. Circulate with unusual friends. Propagate better conversations.”

**P52**



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“Social healing will always require remembering forward.

Together.

In the places we live.”

**P67**



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“Try practicing and offering 3 gifts:

The gift of clarity: Share your best understanding of your views and proposals without judgment or retreat.

The gift of curiosity: Interact with others’ experiences and ideas rather than reacting quickly or judging.

The gift of perseverance: Find ways to stay in touch. Humanising always needs a human touch.”

**P74**



“Civil wars have never solved the deeper problem – the long search for place, dignity, and belonging.

Relationships of dignity and dialogue amidst diversity are the pillars that sustain the social contract of politics without violence.”

**P76/77**



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“Differentiation – us and them – is a natural part of a dynamic, creative, social, and political life. Polarization *per se* is not the problem. Rather, it is dehumanization.

Dehumanization invisibilizes the humanity of the other – their existence, their life, their story – and enwraps itself in an overwhelming sense of threat to survival that justifies the suffering of others to protect ourselves.”

**P80**





“People feel stuck.

Paralysis appears time and again by blaming others and believing that nothing can be done. Even thinking about alternatives is derided as a fool’s errand. This tends to normalise a kind of social and political realism bereft of imagination.”

**P81**



“The daily path requires curiosity and courage.

In particular, we need curiosity about lived experience. About the inner landscape of suffering - of self and other - because here is where we find understanding about our behaviours, beliefs, actions and reactions.

Curiosity also nurtures the soil of where seeds of courage and grace root.”

**P83**



“Humanizing will require two forms of courage.

The first is the courage to reach beyond our narrow bubbles to open improbable conversations and hold fast to unlikely connections.

The second is the courage to face dehumanization, no matter its source or direction.”

**P83**



“The transformative catalyst is the unexpected actions of the improbable few.

I refer to these pockets of vitality as the *critical yeast*.

Critical yeast focuses on quality of relationships - how they interact, find ways to connect, and engage across the diverse whole. This is tender tenacity at work.”

**P85/86**



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“When our wider social fabric is torn, its re-stitching will require us all. This weaving of social healing emerges through accompaniment attending to the well-being of individuals and the health of our relationships.

To pursue social healing, we need to feel the embodied presence of courage and hope.”

**P88**



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“Some will say the stories shared in this Pocket Guide are nice but irrelevant.

I beg to differ.

The proportional inverse seems factually more accurate.

Even as I write, millions of people are *living into convivencia*, good neighbourliness, far more than the number who choose spectacular displays of division and hatred.

The question is how we stitch that potential. Together.”

**P90**



“I prefer the power of the improbable few, whose imagination mobilizes around the harder pathways of staying with relationships across difference that rehumanise with dignity and honesty.

It starts with each and every one of us.”

**P92**





Hi – I'm Anne-Marie

I'm interested in  
curiosity  
and courage at the  
individual level and  
systemic change.

I hope you can take  
something from these slides. Let me know!



Anne-Marie Deans, PhD  
Think Tank. Consulting. Facilitation.

[www.amdeans-consulting.com](http://www.amdeans-consulting.com)

The Pocket Guide can be accessed freely  
including a discussion guide at:  
[www.johnpaullederach.com](http://www.johnpaullederach.com)