



Get Together: Going Virtual

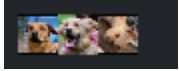
with The Dinner Party

- > [Role call](#)
- > [Live interview](#)

Roll Call

Welcome! We are excited you're here with us. We would love to get to know you and introduce you to the other folks joining us today.

Name (& social if you would like to connect!)	What are you a superfan of? Why?	What brings you to Going Virtual?
Katie O'Connell	Street Art! It's my link between the worlds I have called home. The other day I found a David Shillinglaw a few blocks from my apt. His was a favorite piece of mine when I lived in Cleveland and for a moment I was transported back.	Thinking about how I can connect friends and family throughout the winter in meaningful ways virtually. Just wrapped up a collab project with some friends to celebrate moments during this crazy time & looking for fresh inspo.
Bailey Richardson	Maya Moore! The Michael Jordan of women's basketball who stopped playing mid-career to focus on criminal justice reform. I got to meet her (and her mom) once and almost melted into a puddle in front of her.	Inspiration! The Dinner Party is a regular source of inspiration for me, so I can't wait to hear from them about navigating this wild, difficult time in the world.
Krystie Yen	Creative personality tests, like the Enneagram, Myers-Brigg, astrology. My current obsession is Human Design (I'm a manifesting generator. What about you?)	As a fellow community builder , I'm looking for inspiration for how to recreate magic & intimacy around vulnerable topics in a weird, digital world.
Justin Thongsavanh	A super fan of poetry (reading it, not writing), and anything baking	Excited to listen to Carla and Mary share about TDP learnings!

	related.	
Carla Fernandez from The Dinner Party	Dorky, but superfan of our team dog squad, and our new Slack emojis with each of their faces and moods. It's the little things these days, y'all!  :regalosa::excitedlucy::littlebiscotti:	Pumped to share our learnings from turning a VERY I.R.L. community into a virtual one
Maggie Zhang	Currently addicted to animal crossing! Also a fan of public spaces (and how the pandemic is shaping them)	Heard The Dinner Party podcast and loved the episode - wanted to learn more from Carla and Mary live :)
Danielle Maveal	I'm a super fan of rescue dogs , online events , stand up comedy .	Love the Get Together team <3 Community building is my jam. Hoping to learn more from how The Dinner Party creates connection at online events.
Rosie Sherry @rosiesherry Rosieland	Community building (?!), unschooling, indie hacking.	Community talk, looking to learn the ways of all the people 🤗
Caio Matos Twitter LinkedIn	Live Concerts, CreativeMornings, getting together with interesting amazing people and Community Building =)	Heard a lot about The Dinner Party and it will be great to hear more live =) Also, getting together with you all, of course!
Gunter Wehmeyer calling from Utrecht/NL	I'm a superfan of wild nature, liminality and gentle rebels ;-)	I'm supercurious about GT, getting to know leaders and change making misfits ;-)
JJ Kissinger	At the moment, Ted Lasso on Apple TV. Heart = warmed.	Love following TDP on insta. I'm also starting a new nonprofit for families who have a child with cancer, which will include monthly virtual gatherings for families to play and connect. Eager to learn--thanks for hosting!

Sara Dahan	My 2 black cats, MBTI, mortality (& The Dinner Party!), Brooklyn! & of course community strategy.	Love connecting with people who are reinventing virtual gatherings and community in innovative and energizing ways. No Zoom fatigue here :-)
Mary Horn from The Dinner Party	I'm a superfan of my dog, Lucy (c.f. Carla's slackmoji), and any sort of sourdough baking project :)	Excited to share about the transition to virtual gathering at TDP!
Maddy Allison	I'm a superfan of the show Pen15, Heath bars and mutual aid libraries!	Really excited to hear about how the Dinner Party has transformed their community in a virtual setting.
Mandy Owen (I parade around as my dogs on IG; LinkedIn)	Bitchin' Sauce has gotten me thru the pandemic. Literally in at least 1 of 3 meals or snacks a day.	Superfans of Mary and Carla; and long-time listener of the Get Together! ❤️
Dennis Sarkozy	Experimenting in my gadget-filled kitchen, Japanese City Pop (70s-80s soft jazz), self-directed learning journeys.	Curious to hear how other Parties, Gatherings, and Communities continue to grow at these times.
Helder S Ribeiro from Garantida Podcast	Universal Basic Income \o/ Because it's VC for the people =)	Want to start doing online shared meals myself =) And transition back to offline when the time comes.
Ali Zucker	Rescue dogs + the people who help them. Voting rights. Ted Lasso (and using Ted Lasso gifs).	I come to all the P&C events ;)
Kai from People & Company	Jump roping coz it's equal silliness & fitness	The Dinner Party is equal soul & togetherness
Kevin Huynh	Science fiction. Some recent reads: Dune, Binti, Who Fears Death, Children of Blood and Bone	Hosting and attending in-person get togethers has been a source of inspo/motivation/positivity in my life. It's been tough to turn that off this year. I'm seeking inspiration on how to adapt.

[Get Together](#): Going Virtual with The Dinner Party

Live Interview

As Bailey and Kevin talk with Mary and Karla, Krystie will be taking live notes. We invite you to:

- **Annotate:** Highlight any line in the notes, hit comment, and start an annotation. Leave a thought or learning.
- **Spotlight insights:** Do you know more about a framework, platform, person, or idea mentioned? Add those insights and a link to where we can learn more.
- **Ask or answer a question:** Anyone can ask. We will be monitoring and hope to get to some in our conversation. If you've got an answer, let us in the comments.

Questions for Carla and Mary

[MARY] Can you share what brought you to The Dinner Party and why you decided to get more deeply involved with the organization as a volunteer?

- I came to TDP because I lost my mom to ALS. I was one of her caretakers before she died, so when it happened, I was halfway through a PhD program, newly married, and navigating life. **I found myself googling at 1 AM: dear google, what do you do when you lose a parent?** And that's how I found TDP. I don't even know if I knew what I was looking for, but the TDP is very special. **I could not only show up to a place and talk about grief, but I could also show up as my full self**, the one who was navigating everything alongside a future that I had never pictured for myself without someone whom I thought would be there.
- Since then, I've participated in TDP, hosted my own table, and now I'm on the staff. I was motivated to join HQ because I was able to move through my own grief from an individual level and now I want this for everyone who's looking for it.

[CARLA] What was it like for TDP team as the pandemic became a reality in February and March? Did you adapt immediately? Take time to adjust?

- We went into 2020 with new clarity on our next chapter: how do we build a foundation that allows us to scale from 10K to 100K people—but then a week after our retreat, the entire world changed.
- When things started to get cancelled, my head was freaking out, but my body exhaled a sigh of relief. We weren't going to slow

[Get Together](#): Going Virtual with The Dinner Party

down on our own. **Once we were able to stabilize, the question became: *how do we step up to the plate in a way that felt real?* This felt like our moment: how do we prepare people to have these conversations during a time of loss?**

- At the same time, our entire model was built around people gathering IRL. We were all trying to figure out the Zoom version of what we were doing. We took a couple of swings of what this could be (e.g., calendar of events ranging from yoga, journaling). We then asked our community what they were looking for and what we learned was that they didn't have a group of people to talk to about their grief. **They just wanted connections and homies they could talk to about what was going on (not 1 way connections).**
- We always wondered if the in-person tables were meeting online, and it turns out that they were already naturally doing that. People quickly showed us that virtual tables work: it was easier to get to, there were fewer nerves, and folks could meet more frequently. It's been fun to see how folks are gathering intentionally with way fewer barriers than before.

[MARY] What activities bring Dinner Partiers together today, at the end of 2020? What's new and different and what's the same?

- **Virtual Tables:** We wondered: *will virtual tables have the same magic? It looks different, but it's built on the same principle of making space to get together to have open and honest conversations.* We're not "dinnering" as much as before, but people are finding creative ways to create a communal experience (e.g., everybody make a grilled cheese before we hop on; everyone make a collage project in between meetings; bring an item that reminds you of your person).
- **Buddy System:** A recent community survey revealed that people want 1:1 connections, which sparked the buddy system. We're getting some of the most moving testimonials from that. **Although it doesn't follow our old rules, it is anchored in human connection.** We stopped hand-matching folks and **have given agency to the dinner partiers.** They can now sign up with the host they want to connect with!

[MARY] Leading virtual table curation, are there any learnings from that work you can share?

[Get Together](#): Going Virtual with The Dinner Party

- “The rules of the game” are shifting (e.g., the desirability of virtual events vs. in-person events).
- I don’t think we’ll ever go fully back to in-person gatherings. **In terms of the future: it’ll be a both/and.** We’re not going to give up in-person things, but at the same time, we’re learning that there are a lot of things that are better virtually. Access is a big one (e.g., lowers the barrier to entry for parents with young kids). **These virtual tables have made way for unique connections** (e.g., a lot of affinity spaces have also popped up, like a virtual table for people who’ve lost loved ones to homicide).

[CARLA] What are you currently exploring for the future?

- Early experimentation has shown that **the power of this work is in the specificity of the experience**; there needs to be a common kernel of truth between people to cement that connection. However, **we’re preparing a “mega case study” that takes what we’ve learned from grief from death loss and applies it to other loss experiences** (e.g., miscarriage).
- **Training in workplaces:** A lot of HR teams are realizing that grief & bereavement leave have never been on their radar. We’re training managers how to be grief-sensitive and have meaningful conversations with employees. We’re applying what we’ve learned from grief from death loss and applying it to other forms of grief, like grief from loss of normalcy.

[CARLA] Eleven months into this odd year, what will you take away from it as a community leader?

Additional audience questions for Carla and Mary

Sara: Are there rituals that help attendees transition to a mental space for depth/vulnerability from their day to day lives, since the subject matter is more heavy?

Kai: Do you mind sharing the operating costs & structure of your org? How have they changed since?

[Get Together](#): Going Virtual with The Dinner Party

Gunter: Several are describing this pandemic, WFH as a liminal space of a reset, breaking up grown-in patterns and the opportunity to move forward changed and renewed. What is your vision of learning from covid beyond 2021...

Gunter: What is that ongoing hearing and experiencing of loss, grief, emotions, situations DOING TO YOU as leaders of TDP? What support do you have personally?