



# “The Between”: Relational Intelligence as a New Human Capacity

## 1. A New Kind of Conversation

Last Saturday was the largest Between-Us gathering since the project began more than three years ago. Eighteen faces appeared in their small Zoom windows, waiting for the meeting to find its rhythm. Some were long-time participants; others had drifted away and now felt called back after reading the book. There were smiles, warmth, a quiet anticipation — and, at the same time, a depth of stillness that settled over the call almost immediately.

Even before anyone spoke, there was a tangible silence in the space: not the absence of sound, but a shared presence that drew attention both inward and outward at once. When words did begin to appear, several people remarked that the silence hadn't gone anywhere. It was carrying the meeting underneath the words, as if it were a participant in its own right.

One person described it as a kind of gravitational pull. Words, they said, struggled to reach escape velocity; they rose up, tried to form, then fell gently back into quiet, leaving the stillness untouched. And yet a flow gradually emerged. One voice opened a door for another, and the group settled into a rhythm — slow, spacious, attentive.

What was most striking was how eighteen individuals began softening into something more like eighteen expressions of a single, connected field. Eighteen unique perspectives, yet seamlessly integrated. Not merged, not losing themselves, but participating in an atmosphere that held everyone equally. Identity did not disappear; it simply loosened enough to let something more universal speak through each person in turn.

This is the part that's hardest to explain to anyone who hasn't been inside it: the sense that the group isn't simply a collection of individuals, but a unified field of attention — a quiet “we” that listens as one organism.

Nothing dramatic happened on-screen. But the atmosphere thickened with coherence. People spoke from a grounded immediacy, and others listened from that same place. The result was unmistakable: a feeling of being more oneself and more connected, at the same time.

## 2. The Crisis of Coherence

If the atmosphere of a Between-Us session feels unusual, it is partly because it stands in stark contrast to the wider culture. We are living in a time when coherence — internal, relational, societal — is thinning at every level.

Attention has become fractured. Most conversations take place while the mind is tugged by distraction, anxiety, or overload. Even when people care for one another, it's difficult to land in the same moment.



Loneliness has taken on new forms. It's not merely isolation; it's the weariness of feeling unseen within a sea of noise. Even with more channels for "connection" than ever before, many feel less met, less understood. Social media often leaves people feeling they are being broadcast at, not related to.

Meanwhile, the boundaries through which we meet one another have gradually hardened. Curiosity collapses into defensiveness. The need to be right overshadows the desire to understand. Dialogue — once a place of surprise — now defaults to self-protection.

Meaning, too, is fragmenting. Communities, workplaces, even families sometimes inhabit parallel realities shaped by different narratives. Agreement is rare. Subtle contact is almost impossible.

In this cultural atmosphere, many long for something increasingly scarce: a sense of being present with others in a way that feels real. For somewhere deep at the root of our experience, we each know — though we seem to have forgotten — the effortless nature of being, and how meeting in that recognition is always direct and immediate.

This is the landscape in which the Between-Us groups exist. Not as an escape, but as a counterpoint. A place where noise drops, where attention gathers, where coherence becomes something lived rather than imagined.

In a fragmented society, pockets of shared presence are not luxuries.

They are laboratories for remembering how to be human together. They're seeds of a new potential around which the chaotic environment of our present moment can begin to realign, reorganise, and reconnect.

From the first Between-Us group three years ago to the growing circles today, the same pattern keeps appearing: people feel a recognition. They want to discover this process for themselves — not through ideology, but through experience.

### **3. The Subtle Field: What Actually Happens in a Between-Us Group**

Despite its subtlety, a Between-Us group is structurally simple. There is no method to master, no hierarchy, no script. The form is light by design, so attention can be liberated into what is unfolding now.

There is no "typical" meeting. After greeting one another, there's often an imperceptible shift when we sense the gathering has begun. Sometimes a pause opens the space; sometimes someone brings an energy that wants to be met. Whatever starts it, the first thing that stands out is the quality of listening.

People listen before they speak.

And when someone does speak, it is often from somewhere deeper than the part of themselves that already knows what to say.

The entire atmosphere takes on an unrehearsed quality. This is not a performance space. Certain conditions help the field emerge: vulnerability, transparency, speaking before the conceptual mind has shaped the narrative, letting words form on their own. In doing so, people discover who they are beyond their familiar self-image — and others see them with the same clarity.

As this deepens, a coherence begins holding the space, as though the unfolding is shared rather than driven by any one person. Silence becomes part of the conversation — a shaping force in its own right.

There is no attempt to reach consensus or solve problems. The emphasis is on listening and allowing what is happening now to find its own movement — in oneself, in one another, and between us.

The field can feel delicate at first, especially for those unused to being met without agenda or interpretation. But over time it becomes unmistakable: a collective attention that everyone participates in, whether speaking or quiet.

What differentiates this space from ordinary conversation is the quality of contact. People gradually discover they can bring more of themselves — not as confession or performance, but as a willingness to be seen without

controlling how they appear. The group meets that openness with receptive presence. Something quiet but powerful begins to form.

In this “chamber” of shared attention, a subtle field emerges. It cannot be reduced to any single quality, but it is unmistakable: the group begins to function as something more than the sum of its parts. Individuality remains, yet boundaries soften. People speak from depths they didn’t plan and listen with attunement they didn’t know they possessed.

Nothing is forced.

Nothing is engineered.

It is simply the natural intelligence of human beings meeting without pretence.

And occasionally, the simplicity of the field reveals itself in a single, ordinary moment. In the meeting described earlier, there was a woman who had joined only once the previous year and who sat for most of the session in silence. We could feel her there — attentive, steady, part of the shared stillness. Toward the end, when she finally spoke, she said she had felt welcomed and woven into the group simply through listening, becoming part of the unfolding long before contributing aloud. And when she did speak, her voice joined the conversation as if the space had been waiting for it.

This kind of moment — subtle, human, unforced — points to the deeper architecture of the Between.

## **4. The Three Layers of the Between**

People often describe the Between using metaphors: a current, a field, a shared mind, something larger moving through the room. Beneath those metaphors are three layers of experience that tend to emerge one inside the next.

### **i. Resonance Between Individuals**

The first layer is simple: two people meeting without masks. This is resonance in its most immediate form — the moment when someone speaks from something real in themselves, and another person feels it land.

This resonance is not the empathy of therapy nor emotional contagion. It is more like a human tuning fork: when someone speaks from something true in themselves, something in the other vibrates with it.

Not because they agree, but because the note is genuine.

This resonance isn’t dramatic. It’s subtle but unmistakable: attention begins to focus not only on the words being spoken, but on the unguarded being of the other person — the small cues that arise when someone relaxes and lets their defences fall in an atmosphere of trust. Receiving becomes more natural than interpreting. And there’s a quiet recognition that the other is no longer an idea but a living presence — not separate, but intimately here.

This quality of meeting becomes the foundation. Without resonance, no field can form.

### **ii. Coherence Within the Group**

When more than two people listen with equal depth, resonance amplifies into a shared field of attention. It opens out to encompass the whole group. The group begins to cohere.

Coherence does not mean agreement or harmony. It has an edge. Rooted in stillness, it tingles with possibility — the sense of being collectively poised on the threshold of discovery.

Voices enter at the right time without force. Each voice carries the distinct flavour of the person speaking, yet threads into something that seems to arise from deeper than any individual — as if the space itself is seeking expression through each participant.

Silence thickens and supports.

Insights emerge unbidden.

People discover they can rely on the group's intelligence, not just their own.

The group starts functioning as a single relational system.

The conversation becomes a shared unfolding rather than a sequence of individual contributions.

### **iii. Relational Intelligence in the Between**

The third layer cannot be created by intention.

Relational intelligence emerges only when resonance and coherence stabilise.

It is not individual insight.

It is not groupthink.

It is a field-level intelligence belonging to no one and everyone.

You hear it when someone speaks a truth they didn't know they carried.

You feel it when one person's clarity opens something in another.

You see it when the meeting moves in directions no one planned.

Identity becomes permeable.

People speak not only as themselves, but from a depth that seems to include the whole group.

The "I" widens into a quiet "we" — not as consensus, but as shared presence.

This relational intelligence is the hallmark of the Between: an emergent, non-linear, collective knowing that cannot be possessed alone but arises only between people.

Here, understanding lives between us — as a dynamic field of attention, subtle yet capable of profound shifts.

This expands our understanding of intelligence itself. Across familiar frameworks — cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, moral — intelligence is usually defined as an individual capacity, something measurable inside a single person. But what appears in the Between is a different order of intelligence altogether: emergent, field-level, arising only between people. Collective rather than individual, non-linear rather than additive. Difficult to quantify yet unmistakably felt.

It is not a function of cognition.

It is an expression of connection.

## **5. Why This Matters Culturally**

The subtle field of a Between-Us group might seem like a small thing — a handful of people sitting together with more presence than usual. It is extraordinary to be part of for a couple of hours every week or so. It's delightful, nourishing, something everyone looks forward to. But one might still reasonably ask: so what?

Fair enough — except that the field we enter together doesn't stay inside the meeting. It ripples outward. We each carry it with us as we leave. The field is transformative. Individuals leave with a natural confidence in their own deeper nature, a willingness to stand in the truth they have touched. Their lives begin to shift. Others who have never set foot in a group notice the difference.

And the change is not just personal.

I've seen relational patterns soften that usually feel immovable.

Women find ease and safety in groups of unfamiliar men.

Men open into a listening that is rooted rather than performative.

These are significant cultural shifts.

These meetings speak directly to something our culture is struggling to remember: how to meet one another without defensiveness, performance, or distraction.

We live in an era saturated with communication but starved of contact. Much of what passes for conversation takes place in environments optimised for speed, transaction, and self-assertion. The result is a steady erosion of the conditions that make genuine dialogue possible. Curiosity gives way to identity. Exchange gives way to argument. Attention frays.

In such a landscape, the capacity for shared presence is not a luxury — it is a cultural resource.

Between-Us groups demonstrate something profound: the capacities we think we have lost are not lost — only dormant. Under the right conditions, people can:

- sense one another with clarity
- speak without pretence
- listen without defence
- discover truth not as opinion but as emergent coherence

These fields of presence are not enclaves or refuges.

They are prototypes for a different relational culture.

A culture in which truth is not asserted  
but revealed in the space between us.

## 6. The Between as a New Counterculture

If there is a thread running through all of this, it is that something in our culture is beginning to reassemble itself from the inside out.

The countercultures of the past announced themselves loudly — music scenes, manifestos, marches, communes. The counterculture emerging now is quiet: formed not around belief but attention, not ideology but presence.

It appears when a group sits together without performing.  
When silence becomes a participant.  
When truth emerges from resonance rather than assertion.  
When understanding arises between people rather than within any single mind.

This is not a movement with slogans or manifestos.

It spreads through recognition:

**“This is possible.”**

I call this *resonant ignition*.

And that recognition travels.

People who encounter the Between — through a group, a conversation, or a simple taste of coherence — often speak of the same thing: a sense that something fundamentally human has been hiding in plain sight. That how we meet each other is not incidental but foundational. That relational intelligence is not a luxury but a necessity.

### i. An Evolutionary Turning Point

There is also a deeper evolutionary thread running through this.

Human development over the past several centuries — at least in the West — has been driven by a powerful movement: the differentiation of the individual from the tribe. This separation was an essential step in our evolution. It gave rise to autonomy, interiority, conscience, creativity, and the capacity for ethical self-determination.

But it came at a cost.

As the individual strengthened, the sense of belonging weakened.

The communal field that once held us thinned.

And for hundreds of years, we have lived inside that tension — the pull between personal autonomy and the need for social coherence.

We now live at the breaking point of that tension.

The unrestrained individual — amplified by technology, markets, speed — threatens the relational fabric that makes society possible.

What emerges in the Between offers a different evolutionary possibility:

a reintegration in which autonomy and authenticity are held within a deeper field of belonging. Individuality remains — even strengthens — but is no longer defended against others. Uniqueness becomes an expression of unity rather than fragmentation.

From this perspective, the Between is not just a practice.

It is a prototype for the next stage of human evolution:

**the reintegration of individuality and belonging through relational intelligence.**

## **ii. A Culture That Can Metabolise Fragmentation**

The cultural significance of this work lies in its capacity to shift how we meet fragmentation itself.

If enough people rediscover the simple technology of meeting...

If small groups continue to form, cohere, stabilise...

If we learn how to stay in the room together long enough...

...then something surprising becomes possible:

Not the end of fragmentation,  
but a culture capable of metabolising it.

A culture that can hold difference without shattering.

A culture that can listen deeper than argument.

A culture that can sense truth together.

A culture in which coherence is no longer accidental  
but learned, lived, and shared.

**This is the Between.**

**A field already here, already human, already waiting —  
made visible the moment we drop our armour  
and allow ourselves to meet.**