
COMMUNITY BUILDING PROMPTS

What Really Creates Impact in Social Change Movements?

Episode 11: Reflection & Discussion Guide

How to Use These Prompts

These prompts invite honest conversation about the difference between passion and impact — about how emotional intensity, left unexamined, can narrow thinking and quietly push people out of the room. Use them in leadership circles, peer coaching, coalition meetings, or anywhere people can speak truthfully about how their passion is shaping the group around them.

Ways to engage:

- Team check-ins
- Leadership development cohorts
- Peer coaching sessions
- Coalition strategy meetings
- Post-meeting debriefs
- Written reflection after a high-intensity gathering

The Core Framework

The central claim of this episode:

Passion may be what starts change. Relationships are what sustain it.

Passion gets people in the room, but it isn't enough to keep them there. Unchecked, passion can evolve into certainty — and certainty narrows self-awareness, shrinks curiosity, and weakens the relationships that hold a group together.

The problem: passion doesn't create the problem on its own. Left unregulated, it consumes the room's capacity to think and act together — and the group starts mistaking the loudest voice for the best thinking.

Discussion Prompts

What is my passion making difficult?

Think about a group you lead or belong to. Where has your intensity — your certainty that you're right, your urgency to move fast — made it harder for other people to think, speak, or stay? Be specific. What would it look like to protect the group's ability to think together instead?

When have I mistaken the loudest voice for the best thinking?

Recall a meeting or decision where one or two passionate voices dominated. What got decided as a result? Looking back, was it actually the strongest idea in the room — or just the one spoken first, longest, and loudest?

Who in my group is quietly capable but rarely invited to speak?

Think of someone who shows up consistently but says little. What do you actually know about their experience, their expertise, their reasons for being there? What would it take to make space for them before they quietly leave?

How is my passion shaping the way I think, relate, and contribute to the group?

This is the shift at the heart of the episode — from measuring how passionate you are, to noticing what your passion is doing to the people around you. What's one honest answer to this question today?

Guidelines for Dialogue

Name the pattern, not the person

If one voice consistently dominates, that's not a personal failing — it's a group dynamic worth naming out loud, without blame.

Reward curiosity over certainty

Curiosity keeps a group thinking together. Certainty shuts the door on other people's ideas before they're spoken.

Make space before someone withdraws

Quiet isn't the same as absent. Invite the people who haven't spoken before assuming they have nothing to add.

Center relationships as strategy

The strategy rarely fails on its own. It's the relationships underneath it that erode first — protect those on purpose.

DEEPER REFLECTION

Whose Passion Gets Heard?

The episode names how passion is read differently depending on who is expressing it — and how quiet, consistent contribution can go completely unseen. Consider:

“Whose passion is read as leadership — and whose is read as difficulty?”

Outspoken intensity is often rewarded as commitment. The same intensity from someone outside the room's dominant culture is more often read as difficulty, or as “too much.” Who gets the benefit of the doubt in your group when passion runs high — and who doesn't?

“What does staying quiet cost leaders who've learned that visibility is risk?”

Some leaders have learned, often through experience, that speaking up carries a cost others don't pay. A person's silence in a meeting may not reflect a lack of passion — it may reflect a lifetime of deciding where it's safe to show it. What would it take to make your space one where that calculation isn't necessary?

BONUS

For Teams Building Collective Thinking

If your team wants to practice regulating passion instead of being run by it, try these:

“What would it look like to slow down before we decide?”

Build in a pause between hearing an idea and committing to it. Speed rewards whoever spoke first, not whoever thought it through.

“How do we invite the quietest person in first?”

Try asking for input in reverse order of who usually speaks. It changes what — and who — the group actually hears.

“What do we need to interrupt the ‘loudest equals right’ belief?”

Name it directly when it's happening: “We've heard from three people — let's hear from someone else before we move on.”

PRACTICE TOOL

Creating Shared Language for Regulating Passion

The episode recommends building shared language so groups can name intensity early. Try these phrases:

<i>“I notice I’m speaking a lot right now”</i>	<i>“Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t spoken”</i>
<i>“I might be certain, not right”</i>	<i>“What am I not seeing?”</i>
<i>“Let’s slow down before we decide”</i>	<i>“I want to protect our ability to think together”</i>

Group reflection:

Which of these phrases would help your team? What other phrases do you need? How would you normalize using them?

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Commitment to Action

After engaging with these prompts, what will you actually do?

One moment I will pause before speaking:

One person I will invite to weigh in:

One story I will hold loosely instead of defend:

Passion may be what starts change. Relationships are what sustain it.

Regulated passion is leadership.
