

THE DESTINATION WE ARE CHOOSING

Final Facilitator Guide - Movement Use Edition

*A Community Conversation Inspired by
Echoes of History: The Patterns We Refuse to See*

Jerry Elman

The Purpose

This is not a lecture.

It is not a political debate.

It is not a Holocaust comparison program.

It is not a book report.

It is the beginning of a community conversation - and, if people carry it forward, the beginning of a movement.

The pull into this program is not abstract history.

The pull is what many people already feel.

People feel squeezed.

People feel exhausted.

People feel less secure.

People feel unheard.

People feel more divided.

People feel something has changed, but they do not always know how to name it.

The purpose of this program is to help people recognize those feelings, see that they are not limited to one party or ideology, and ask a deeper question:

If so many of us are feeling the same pressure, why are we fighting each other?

The book provides the lens.

The conversation creates the mirror.

The movement begins when people leave the room and carry the conversation to someone else.

The Core Movement Message

Many of us are feeling the same pressure.

That should be a common bond.

Instead, shared pressure is being turned into fear, blame, division, and silence.

History warns us what happens when people get used to that.

The work now is to recognize the pattern, stop feeding it, and rebuild the better patterns that bring us back toward WE.

The One-Sentence Program

Many of us are feeling the same pressure, but instead of becoming a common bond, that shared pain is being turned into fear, blame, division, and silence - and history warns us to recognize that pattern before it becomes the future we leave behind.

The Session Spine

Stage	Question	Core Point
WHAT	What is happening to us?	People feel free on paper, but trapped in practice. Their money, time, attention, patience, trust, and sense of future feel increasingly claimed before they get to choose. This is the modern feeling of being trapped. Do not lead with the word 'serfdom' unless the room is ready for it. Lead with the feeling.
WHY	Why are we fighting each other?	Because pressure can be used. Fear, anger, attention, blame, silence, and division can all be used. This is extraction. The central question is: Who benefits?
HOW	How does this become dangerous?	History warns us that pressure can become fear, fear can become blame, blame can become division, division can become silence, and silence can become normal. That is the echo: not identical events, not comparison, but human patterns.
ACTION	What do we do now?	We stop feeding harmful patterns. We take something back. We strengthen better patterns. We invite someone else into the conversation. That is how the movement grows.

90-Minute Program Flow

0-3 Minutes

Host Introduction

Host says:

Good evening, and thank you for being here.

Tonight's program is *The Destination We Are Choosing*, a guided community conversation inspired by Jerry Elman's book, *Echoes of History: The Patterns We Refuse to See*.

Jerry writes as the son of Holocaust survivors, but tonight is not a Holocaust lecture and it is not a Holocaust comparison program.

It is also not a political debate.

Tonight is a conversation about pressure, blame, division, silence, and the patterns ordinary people can begin to accept without realizing how much they have changed.

The central question of the evening is:

| What changed in me?

Please welcome Jerry Elman.

3-10 Minutes

Opening: Why This Conversation Matters

Jerry says:

Thank you.

Thank you for being here.

Tonight is called *The Destination We Are Choosing* because every pattern leads somewhere.

But I do not want to begin with history.

I want to begin with what many people are feeling right now.

People are tired. People are under pressure. People are working harder. People are more anxious. People feel less secure. People feel like life has become harder to hold together.

Many people feel free on paper, but trapped in practice.

They may not use that language. But they feel it.

They feel their choices getting smaller. They feel their patience getting thinner. They feel their trust weakening. They feel themselves reacting faster and listening less.

That is where this conversation begins.

Not with blame. Not with politics. Not with accusation.

With the feeling that something has changed.

And the question is not only: What changed in the world?

The question is: What changed in me?

10-22 Minutes

WHAT - What Is Happening to Us?

Purpose: Help people recognize the shared feeling before moving to explanation.

Jerry says:

I want to ask something by show of hands.

How many of you have felt that something changed in the world around us, but you could not quite explain what it was? [Pause.]

How many of you feel people are quicker to judge and slower to listen? [Pause.]

How many of you feel more exhausted by fear, anger, outrage, and blame? [Pause.]

How many of you have noticed yourself becoming more guarded, less patient, or less trusting? [Pause.]

Thank you.

That is not weakness. That is awareness.

And here is something important.

These feelings are not owned by one party. They are not owned by one ideology.

People on the right feel squeezed. People on the left feel squeezed. People in the middle feel squeezed. People who are tired of all of it feel squeezed.

People may explain it differently. They may blame different people. They may use different words.

But underneath, many people are feeling the same things: less secure, less heard, less respected, less certain about the future, less able to believe that work leads to stability, less able to trust what they are being told.

That should be a common bond.

So one of the questions tonight is: If so many people are feeling the same pressure, why are we fighting each other?

That question moves us from what people feel to what is being done with what people feel.

22-38 Minutes

WHY - Extraction: Who Benefits?

Purpose: Show how shared pressure gets redirected into blame and division.

Jerry says:

When people feel trapped long enough, they look for explanations. That is human.

When life feels harder, people ask: Who did this? Who took something from me? Who is responsible? Who should I blame?

Those are powerful questions. Sometimes they lead to truth. Sometimes they lead to needed change.

But sometimes those questions are used.

Sometimes shared pain is turned into organized blame. Sometimes people who feel the same pressure are taught to see each other as enemies.

That is where extraction comes in.

When I use the word extraction, I mean something simple: something valuable is being taken from people or used from people without giving them something healthy back.

Sometimes it is money. But sometimes it is time, attention, fear, anger, loyalty, silence, blame, or division.

If my anger is being used, I need to ask who benefits. If my fear is being fed, I need to ask who benefits. If I am being pushed to blame someone else instead of understanding the whole picture, I need to ask who benefits.

That does not mean every problem is fake. It does not mean people are wrong to be angry. It does not mean people are imagining their pain.

The pain is real. The pressure is real. The fear is often real.

But the question is: Who is using that pain?

Who benefits when I am angry? Who benefits when I am afraid? Who benefits when I stop listening? Who benefits when ordinary people turn against each other? Who benefits when shared pressure becomes division?

Not everyone experiences the pressure the same way.

Some people are insulated from it.

For people protected by extreme wealth, the system may not feel broken at all. It may feel like it is working - because for them, it is.

That is not about hating people. It is about being honest that insulation changes perception.

If the system still works very well for you, you may not feel the urgency to repair what others are living through.

That is why the question matters: Who benefits when the people under pressure are turned against each other?

Reflection 1

What Am I Being Encouraged to Feel?

Jerry says:

Take one minute and write one line.

Something I am often encouraged to feel, fear, repeat, or accept is:

[Pause.]

Now write: Who or what may benefit from that?

[Pause.]

You do not have to share this. Just sit with it.

Because once we ask who benefits, we slow the pattern down.

38-54 Minutes

HOW - Echoes: How Does History Warn Us?

Purpose: Bring in history and the book without turning the program into a history lecture.

Jerry says:

This is where history becomes useful.

Not because events repeat exactly. They do not.

My parents were Holocaust survivors. That history is always with me.

But I want to be very careful.

I am not saying today is the Holocaust. I am not saying America is Nazi Germany. I am not saying history repeats exactly. It does not.

The people are different. The places are different. The language is different. The technology is different. The circumstances are different.

But human patterns can return.

Fear. Blame. Silence. Cruelty. Unstable truth. Us and them. Ordinary people accepting things they once would have rejected.

That is the echo.

The danger is not that the past returns in the same clothes.

The danger is that the same human behaviors return in new clothes.

The point is not to label people with the past.

The point is to recognize patterns before they become history.

History is not only what we read later in books. History is created by what people accept while they are living through it.

By the time something becomes history, it has already happened.

We can study the past. We can learn from the past. But we cannot act on the past. We can only act on what is happening now.

We can only act on the patterns and behaviors in front of us.

That is why the warning from history is not only: Watch the leaders. Yes, watch the leaders. But also watch ourselves.

Watch what we are getting used to. Watch what we are excusing. Watch what we are repeating. Watch what we are becoming.

54-67 Minutes

Pair Conversation: What Have I Gotten Used To?

Purpose: Move from listening to internalizing.

Jerry says:

Now I want you to turn to one person near you.

This is not a debate. This is not about politics. This is not about proving anything.

Talk honestly for a few minutes about this question: What have I gotten used to that should still bother me?

Maybe it is anger. Maybe it is cruelty. Maybe it is lying. Maybe it is judging too fast. Maybe it is silence. Maybe it is excusing our own side. Maybe it is checking out. Maybe it is assuming the worst.

Maybe it is no longer asking: Is this who I want to be?

[Give people 5 to 7 minutes.]

Let's come back together.

What did that question bring up? Not speeches. Just one honest observation.

[Take 4 or 5 brief responses.]

Thank you.

That is the point of the mirror.

Not shame. Awareness.

Getting used to something is not the same as choosing it.

Once we notice what has changed in us, we have a chance to choose again.

67-80 Minutes

ACTION - The Destination We Are Choosing

Purpose: Move from warning to responsibility, hope, and movement.

Jerry says:

If we stop with warning, that is not enough.

The question is not only what has gone wrong. The question is what we still choose.

Patterns are not only harmful. There are better patterns too.

Compassion is a pattern. Listening is a pattern. Friendship is a pattern. Honesty is a pattern.

Courage is a pattern. Showing up is a pattern. Refusing to dehumanize people is a pattern.

Community is a pattern.

So the final question is not only: What have I gotten used to? It is also: What do I want to strengthen? And: What do I want to take back?

We take back control when we slow down before reacting.

When we ask: Why do I believe this? Who gave me this explanation? Who benefits from my anger? Who benefits from my fear? Who benefits from my silence? What is this doing to me? Is this still my value? Or is this a value someone else normalized for me?

We take back control when we refuse to let fear decide who we become.

When we stop rewarding cruelty.

When we tell the truth even when our own side does not want to hear it.

When we listen without surrendering what we believe.

When we remember that disagreement does not have to become hate.

This is why the program is called The Destination We Are Choosing.

A destination is not always chosen in one dramatic moment.

Sometimes it is chosen quietly: by what we accept, what we excuse, what we repeat, what we ignore, what we let harden in us, and what we strengthen.

Final Writing Prompt

The Carry-Forward Action

Jerry says:

Take two minutes and write four short answers.

One pattern I want to stop feeding is:

[Pause.]

One thing I want to take back in myself is:

[Pause.]

One better pattern I want to strengthen is:

[Pause.]

One person I want to invite into this conversation is:

[Pause.]

This is the action step. Not everything. Not fixing the world tonight. Just one honest place to begin.

Movements do not begin because everyone agrees on everything.

They begin when people recognize something together and decide to carry it forward.

80-90 Minutes

Closing and Book Connection

Purpose: End with movement first, book second. The book is the deeper next step.

Jerry says:

Tonight was not meant to answer every question.

It was meant to leave us with better questions.

What is happening to us? Why is our pressure being used? How does history warn us? What do I do now?

And underneath all of that: What changed in me?

Many Americans are feeling the same pressures. That could be a common bond.

But when shared pain is turned into blame, we lose sight of each other.

We may not be able to choose everything happening around us. But we can choose the patterns we feed. We can choose the patterns we stop feeding.

And those patterns shape the destination we are choosing.

This conversation is only the beginning.

The book goes deeper into the patterns we touched tonight - how they form, how people get used to them, and how history warns us before it is too late to choose differently.

Books are available tonight, not because the book is the end of the conversation, but because it is a way to keep going deeper.

Thank you for being part of this conversation.

I will stay afterward for anyone who wants to talk more, ask about the book, share a reflection, or continue the conversation one-on-one.

The Movement Message

Use this with hosts, readers, audience members, libraries, community centers, faith groups, civic groups, book clubs, and media.

Many of us are feeling the same pressure.

That should be a common bond.

But shared pressure is being turned into blame and division.

The Destination We Are Choosing is a growing community conversation about recognizing that pattern and rebuilding the ones that bring us back toward WE.

Host / Organizer Framing

Do not pitch this as a book talk first.

Pitch it as a community conversation.

This is a conversation many people are ready for but do not know how to begin.

It is for people who feel something has changed, who are tired of the fighting, and who want a way to talk about pressure, blame, division, and responsibility without turning the room into a political argument.

The book gives the conversation depth. The program gives people a place to begin.

Book Sales Framing

Do not hard sell the book.

The book is the next step for people who want to go deeper.

The conversation opens the door. The book helps people go deeper.

The book is available for those who want to better understand the patterns we touched tonight - how they form, how they become normal, and how history warns us while there is still time to choose differently.

Session Spine for Jerry

WHAT: People feel trapped.

WHY: Their pressure is being used.

HOW: History warns what pressure can become.

ACTION: We can stop feeding harmful patterns, strengthen better ones, and invite others into the conversation.

Emergency Lines

If the Room Gets Too Political

I understand why the conversation goes there.

But I want to bring us back one layer deeper.

Tonight is not about proving which side is right.

Tonight is about what happens to people when fear, blame, outrage, and division become the way we understand everything.

Every side has people telling them who to fear. Every side has people telling them who to blame.

The question is not only what do I believe.

The question is: What is this doing to me? And: Who benefits if I stay angry, afraid, divided, or distracted?

If Someone Challenges the Holocaust Connection

That is exactly why I want to be careful.

I am not saying today is the Holocaust.

I am not saying history repeats exactly.

I am saying that my parents' history taught me to notice human patterns before they reach their worst destination.

The point is not to compare events. The point is to recognize behaviors.

The people, places, and events are never exactly the same. But the patterns can be the same. The behaviors can be the same.

And when the patterns are the same, we have to ask where they are leading.

If 'Serfdom' Sounds Too Strong

I do not mean legal serfdom.

I mean the feeling many people have that more and more of their lives are already claimed.

Their money. Their time. Their attention. Their future. Their patience. Their sense of control.

That feeling matters because people who feel trapped become vulnerable to fear, blame, and division.

If 'Extraction' Sounds Too Abstract

Extraction simply means something valuable is being taken from people or used from people without giving them something healthy back.

Sometimes it is money. Sometimes it is attention. Sometimes it is anger. Sometimes it is fear. Sometimes it is loyalty. Sometimes it is silence. Sometimes it is blame.

The question is: Who benefits?

If Someone Says 'Who Benefits?' Sounds Like a Conspiracy

That is a fair concern.

I am not talking about conspiracy. I am talking about incentives.

In every society, some people and systems benefit from attention, fear, anger, loyalty, clicks, votes, donations, ratings, and division.

The question is not meant to make us suspicious of everything. It is meant to slow us down enough to ask whether our pain is being used to shape us.

If Someone Says All Change Is Not Bad

I agree completely.

All change is not bad.

Some old norms needed to change. Some old silences needed to be broken. Some voices needed to be heard.

The question tonight is not whether change is good or bad.

The question is whether we are choosing our changes - or being shaped into them without realizing it.

Final Reminder

Do not overteach.

Do not overexplain.

Do not argue.

Do not defend every sentence.

Do not try to cover the whole book.

The audience journey is:

What is happening to us? People feel trapped.

Why is it happening? Their pressure is being used.

How does history warn us? Pressure can become fear, blame, division, silence, and normal.

What action do we take? Stop feeding harmful patterns, strengthen better ones, and invite others into the conversation.

The evening succeeds if people leave with one honest question:

| **What changed in me?**

And one hopeful choice:

| **What better pattern do I want to strengthen?**