

# THE STORY SO FAR

Breaks and Joins began in 2020 as a collaboration between Mo Sumah, who ran a **repair cafe**, artists Sue Mayo, Amanda Mascarenhas and Chuck Blue Lowry, and conflict resolution specialist Raj Bhari.

We became part of the [Being Human Festival](#), the national celebration of the Humanities in that year. With the co-operation of [Goldsmiths, University of London](#), and during the covid pandemic, we ran **online repair sessions**, led by our Associate Mo and textile specialist Rose Sinclair; creative workshops, the Beauty of Broke, led by Sue Mayo and Chuck Blue Lowry; **Conversation Circles**, led by Raj Bhari, on repair in our communities; sessions by Unitarian Minister and artist Clare MacDonald, on the question, **Can everything be mended?**; and an international online conversation led by Theatre Director Sudip Chakraborty on **pluralism and nationalism**.

We attracted participants from across the UK, Canada, USA and Bangladesh.

## [Being Human Festival 2020 highlights](#)



## COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS: 2021-PRESENT

We then developed a series of community-based workshops. Led by Sue, Amanda, Raj and guest artist Bori Hardi, these workshops provide calm and reflective spaces for people to explore their ideas and feelings around repair, from the personal to the global. We developed a dynamic mix of visual art activities, creative writing and exploration through conversation that allowed the group to work gently, but also to explore some complex questions about inequalities, fear, community and futures.

Our weekly workshops engage a small but committed group of local people, and we also participate in an annual community festival, bringing in a wider group of participants, including children.

The workshops run alongside [Mend it with Mo](#), and we encourage those who bring objects to repair to tell us their stories.

We have also led open workshops at [Sydenham Garden](#), a therapeutic garden in South London who work with nature to inform their work with adults and young people experiencing ill health, at [Time and Talents](#), bringing together older people, many with blindness and visual impairment, and children, to explore understandings of and hopes for their community, and with NHS staff at Lewisham Hospital.



## TRAINING IN COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Since 2021 and led by team members Raj Bhari and Sue Mayo, we have offered courses in **Community Conversation**, supporting arts and cultural workers to build their skills in managing difficult conversations, and encouraging autonomy and activism. The methodology draws on **active listening**, separating facts and feelings, and unlocking our imaginations and hopes. It also begins from the perspective that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience in the participants. We encourage storytelling and reflection between participants as central to the training – **a co-learning experience**.

This has included workshops for artists, held at [Sydenham Garden](#) and [New Cross Learning](#); sessions for young activists and community builders at [Telegraph Hill Centre](#); and training for members of [Lewisham Unity](#), a Unitarian community in South London.

*“The group itself was a great example of a kind of ethical relationships based on listening, acceptance and dialogue,” a participant told us after the session.*

*“Through these sessions I became more confident that I could take action myself, not just stand on the side-lines,” another participant commented, “I learned to listen and I really got listened to.”*





## BREAKS & JOINS FILM 2022

In 2022 Core member Chuck Blue Lowry and the team created a short film to show the ways in which the themes of repair resonate across all the work that we do. The film was launched at [Goldsmiths, University of London](#), and has been shown widely since then.

Feedback on the film reveals how much it strikes a chord and communicates what we are about.

### [Click here to view the film](#)

Below are comments from our viewers:

*"This is so beautiful, the words and images are so powerful and authentic and inspiring. Thank you."*

*"So beautiful and many-layered. Brought tears to my eyes and inspiration to my heart."*

*"Wonderfully challenging, inspiring, and so truthful. I love the visual words throughout and the hands which appear. Last clip my favourite: the mends must always be much bigger than the tears."*

*"What an inspiring film, it's wonderful to be part of the global repair community. I have shared this with our group of repairers and menders here at The Tinkering, at Dunmore Resource Recovery Centre, NSW, Australia. Thanks for making this film. I have enjoyed listening to your podcast too. I hope we get to meet one day."*

*"I can identify with this lovely film."*

