



Community: The Structure of Belonging

Peter Block

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Most of our communities are fragmented and at odds within themselves. Businesses, social services, education, and health care each live within their own worlds. The same is true of individual citizens, who long for connection but end up marginalized, their gifts overlooked, their potential contributions lost. What keeps this from changing is that we are trapped in an old and tired conversation about who we are. If this narrative does not shift, we will never truly create a common future and work toward it together.

What Peter Block provides in this inspiring new book is an exploration of the exact way community can emerge from fragmentation. How is community built? How does the transformation occur? What fundamental shifts are involved? What can individuals and formal leaders do to create a place they want to inhabit? We know what healthy communities look like—there are many success stories out there. The challenge is how to create one in our own place.

Block helps us see how we can change the existing context of community from one of deficiencies, interests, and entitlement to one of possibility, generosity, and gifts. Questions are more important than answers in this effort, which means leadership is not a matter of style or vision but is about getting the right people together in the right way: convening is a more critical skill than commanding. As he explores the nature of community and the dynamics of transformation, Block outlines six kinds of conversation that will create communal accountability and commitment and describes how we can design physical spaces and structures that will themselves foster a sense of belonging.

In Community, Peter Block explores a way of thinking about our places that creates an opening for authentic communities to exist and details what each of us can do to make that happen.

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