

## **Book Review: *Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block**

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Peter Block's new book *Community: the structure of belonging* is written to support those community leaders who care for the wellbeing of their community. It is for all those who want to be part of co-creating an organization, neighborhood, city or country that works for all, and who has the faith and the energy to create such a place.

According to Block the challenge for community leaders is to transform the isolation and self interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. It begins with shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community including accountabilities, a generosity of spirit, and bringing forth the gifts of its members.

Block provides a community leadership process guideline to help community leaders tap the critical wisdom of their community, by asking quality questions, hosting the conversations that matter, and co-creating what he calls a 'beloved community' of hope and possibility. He speaks in particular to the power of the small group conversation and the small group as the unit of transformation. He addresses the topic of leadership and provides insights from leading edge thinkers on transformation. Hosting the conversations that matter begins with the invitation to participate and the all purpose ownership question "What have I done to contribute to the very problem that I am complaining about and want to change?", and includes hosting the dissent conversation, the possibility conversation, the ownership conversation, the commitment conversation and finally the gifts and gratitude conversation.

I would highly recommend this book for community leaders. My take away is the reinforcement of leaders leading one conversation at a time. The right conversation involves quality questions, deep listening and releases aliveness and intention into the community. At the close of each conversation reflect and ask as a result of this conversation, how are we different, how is this community, organization or group different? Since reading this book, I find myself in all my roles as a Board Director and Leadership Development facilitator and coach for a wide variety of organizations and communities, reflecting on what are the questions we should be asking and the conversations we need to be having. I also find myself consulting the last section of the book which is a practical reference guide that lists the community leadership process and sample questions to guide the conversations. Overall, a must read for community leaders!

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