

Deepening Community



EXERCISES

1. Take the Community Meaning Survey

Community may seem distant at times, but it is all around us, waiting to be found. I believe that the longing for the experience of community is a deeply held feeling inside of people. Even when we do not feel or see this longing on a daily basis, this desire lies just under the surface, waiting to be evoked. Recognizing the need for community can open us to others who are seeking the same and to possibilities beyond our imaginings. This survey has been taken by hundreds of people (see the “500 Voices- A Community Assessment” tool) and each time we are struck by how meaningful this exploration was for them. It is for this reason we have included it here so you too can experience the power of this survey.

Instructions for taking the survey:

This survey should take you about 15 minutes to complete. Please answer the questions quickly writing the first thoughts that come to mind. For each question we ask you to limit your response to the one line we have provided you. There are no right or wrong answers simply use phrases or key words that help you answer the question.

About the Survey

In our survey, a word or concept is introduced in each question, leading to a larger concept. For example, the first three questions of the survey are: “What does ‘community’ mean to you?” “What does ‘benefit’ mean to you?” “What does ‘the benefit of community’ mean to you?” This is a form of Socratic questioning that evokes the participants’ thoughts sequentially, allowing them to build on previous answers or ideas. As a respondent to this survey you are asked to answer with the first thought that enters into your head and you are encouraged to write brief, point-form answer for each question.

1. What does “community” mean to you?
2. What does “benefit” mean to you?
3. What does “the benefit of community” mean to you?
4. What does “belonging” mean to you?
5. What does “belonging to community” mean to you?
6. What does “identity in community” mean to you?
7. What does “experience” mean to you?
8. What does “experiencing community” mean to you?
9. When do you most profoundly experience community?

10. What does “building” mean to you?
11. What does “community building” mean to you?
12. What builds community for you?
13. What does “breakdown” mean to you?
14. What does “community breakdown” mean to you?
15. What causes community to break down for you?
16. What does “fear” mean to you?
17. What does “community of fear” mean to you?
18. What do people do when they experience fear as a community?
19. What does “feeling” mean to you?
20. What does “community feeling” mean to you?
21. When do you most feel a sense of community?

2. For the artist in each one of us

Below you will find two boxes that allow you to draw pictures and in turn use the creative side of your brain for these two questions. If possible use a box of coloured crayons or markers. Another option is for you draw these on a separate page. If you are able to scan and post your picture we would love you to post it at www.deepeningcommunity.ca. You can also find pictures others have submitted on this site.

Draw a picture of your most profound experience of community:

Draw a picture of your first memory of community:



3. If you really love to draw:

Take a blank sheet of paper and write one of the two questions above across the top of the page and then draw your answer using as many colours as your creative calls you to. As you are on your seeking community journey post these pictures somewhere you will see them often – doing so can draw you into your journey on a regular basis. Another option is too draw several pictures for each question allowing you to explore multiple experiences and meanings of both your first memories of community and also of those experiences that are most profound. I find this can be very meaningful especially when they are posted side by side. I have seen groups cover a whole wall with their pictures and keep it there for months to inspire them and deepen their conversations.

Now What?

First:

Re-read your answers to the survey questions asking the following “big” questions to get an overall sense of how you are defining community and what experiences resonate.

When I review this answer...

- What do I mean by Community?
- What do I mean by Belonging?

- How do I describe my Personal experience of community?
- How has community shaped my Identity?
- What do I think builds community?
- What do I think destroys community?
- What practical examples do I describe for building community?
- What policies or ideas do I imply in my answers that might help government or organizations to increase the probability of more community?

Second:

Share your ideas with others! Create a profile on www.deepeningcommunity.org and share your ideas/thoughts that came out throughout these exercises.