Importance Of A community

Humans aren't meant to be alone all the time: connecting as part of a meaningful community is important for our mental well-being.

Humans are social beings, and the need to belong is deeply ingrained in our nature. That’s why since the beginning of times humans have been drawn to creating their own communities. Today, important communities continue to be formed around different shared interests of characteristics, such as religious or spiritual groups, professional associations, neighbourhoods, volunteer groups or sports clubs.

In fact, belonging to a group or community we can identify with helps us develop a stronger sense of personal and collective identity. It can also give a boost to our self-esteem and to our willingness to take on the world and make our dreams happen. But the importance of community goes beyond that.

So, just why is community important? To answer the question we can look at what happens if we don’t have community we can call our own. Since we’re inherently sociable beings, feeling disconnected from others can deeply affect our self perception and emotional health.

Indeed, some studies have linked the emotional strain of loneliness caused by social isolation to physical illness, including sleep disorders, heart disease and a weakened immune system. A Public Health study done in Canada even ranked social isolation as a higher risk factor for premature death.

Having said that, the past year or so has been a strange one for social interaction and personal relationships. On the one hand, lockdown measures and work-from-home arrangements have made it harder to meet and connect with others, so feelings of isolation and loneliness are on the rise.

However, that hasn't undermined the importance of community. On the contrary, these changes have prompted many people to reconsider the significance of neighbourhood feeling, bringing the concept of meaningful belonging back into the spotlight.

For example, during the past few months we have seen communities coming together with fundraising initiatives to help those struggling financially or otherwise. Others have learnt to sew just to be able to make PPE – such as face masks – and delivered them to those who needed them the most.

7 Benefits it Offers

1. Support and safety

Living with uncertainty has become the norm during the COVID pandemic. This has made it more important than ever to have a strong support network in place. Indeed, one of the main reasons behind the importance of community is that it can help fight feelings of hopelessness and give us the certainty that we are safe when surrounded by our community. Furthermore, the benefits go both ways, since supporting others also gives us a boost.

2. Connection and belonging

Togetherness is so central to our experience as humans; that feeling we are part of something bigger can help give meaning to our lives. Finding others with the same values, interests, and world views makes us realise that we’re not alone and makes us feel valued. Indeed, belonging highlights why community is necessary: being accepted into a group gives us a stronger sense of self and can help us cope with negative experiences and feelings.

3. Influence

Sometimes we need an extra push to stop us from falling into unhealthy habits or thoughts. Experiencing the positive influence of like-minded people is another reason behind the importance of community. Studies confirm that our overall health is partly determined by our ability to look after ourselves, but sometimes we simply don’t feel capable of it. Communities can influence us and motivate us to invest in our well-being and to bring positive changes to our lives.

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4. Sharing

Sharing activities, ideas and feelings reinforces not only our sense of self, but also adds worth and value to the community. Indeed, the more the merrier applies in this case! That’s not to mention the huge beneficial effect sharing can have on mental health: higher engagement, positive emotions, and empowerment are only some of the benefits. Sharing is caring.

5. Learning

Communities are usually built around common interests, but that doesn’t mean they’re homogeneous. We can still find people within them who have different views, experiences, or beliefs, and learning from them can help us reach insights that we may not have reached on our own.

6. Acceptance

Developing community bonds with others who have different views may be challenging, but it’s also an opportunity to practise acceptance. I had a personal breakthrough This valuable lesson can bring peace and relief. And there’s another side to acceptance: self-acceptance. Community belonging helps us accept that sometimes we’re strong and sometimes we’re vulnerable and that we need the support of others to avoid unnecessary emotional struggles and pain.

7. More connections, more chances of success

The importance of community goes beyond the personal sphere and extends to professional development. Since the pandemic begun we’ve seen a stronger focus on supporting local businesses, so this is a good place to start networking and building strong relationships. You never know where that could take your business idea or professional life.