

THE ABUNDANT COMMUNITY



IDEAS

- ❖ These questions are conversation starters. Ask the group, “What question would you like to start with?”
- ❖ Keep discussion 60 – 90 minutes



TIME

- ❖ If your group cannot devote seven sessions to this study, limit your study to four sessions reading Part 1, 2, 3 with session four focused on idea generation and next steps.

THE LIMITS OF CONSUMPTION

- ❖ In this chapter, is there one thing that challenged you?
- ❖ What gift did you receive from this chapter?
- ❖ Is there a passage from this chapter that you would like to share with others?
- ❖ Is there a question you would like to ask?
- ❖ Do you have a story to share that relates to a theme in this chapter?
- ❖ How would you define the following terms: Citizen, Consumer, Community, Association, Neighbourhood? How do Peter Block and John McKnight define these terms? Do your definitions differ with theirs?
- ❖ What is a gift you received from this discussion?

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IDEA

- ❖ Food is a connector of people. Incorporate food into your gathering.

WHAT DID WE LOSE AND WHERE DID WE GO?

- ❖ Is there a passage from this chapter that you would like to share with the group?
 - ❖ The underlying question being posed in the book *The Abundant Community* is: Are you a producer of your own future, or are you a purchaser of what others have in mind for you? How would you respond to this question?
 - ❖ There are four stages in the transition from community and family competence toward professionalization and communal incompetence. They are:
 - i. A condition of being human is converted into a problem.
 - ii. Care becomes commodified, categorized, taught and certified.
 - iii. Personal issues become a private conversation between you and the professional.
 - iv. Efficient, consistent, predictable services are provided to a group of deficient people in a particular target market.Have you experienced any of these stages in your life?
 - ❖ Looking at the above four stages, what stages would you propose in making the transition from professionalization and communal incompetence toward community and family competence?
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IDEA

- ❖ If you are leading the study, see if there is someone else in the group who is willing to lead the discussion.

THE EFFECTS OF LIVING IN A CONSUMER WORLD

- ❖ In this chapter, is there something that challenged you?
- ❖ Consumerism has three tenets:
 - i. The good life is achieved through purchasing power, “The good life is defined by what we produce and what we consume.”
 - ii. To acquire the power to purchase one must follow the system way of life, “We work during week so that in nights and weekends we can go shopping.”
 - iii. If you live the system way, it becomes who you are, “When we find moments to be apart from the work, or system, we seek to be entertained, which means spending more time in a world designed and managed by others.”

Based on these, how is consumerism active in your own life?

- ❖ Consumerism costs us in the following way:
 - Nature is marginalized, consumed, developed or managed.
 - Our sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction increases.
 - The individual takes precedent over the communal.
 - Enslaved to debt.
 - Loss of connection to others.
 - Loss of care for others.

Do you agree with these costs? Would you add more to the list?

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IDEA

- ❖ Devote some time to storytelling. Try asking “Is there a time you felt connected?”

* The abundant community values stories. The consumerist system values statistics.

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- ❖ Abundant Communities adhere to five basic tenets:
 - i. We have enough. Satisfaction is found in what we have.
 - ii. We have the capacity to provide what we need in the face of the human condition. The family and the neighbourhood have the collective capacity to handle an uncertain future.
 - iii. We organize our world in the context of cooperation and satisfaction. Cooperation is valued over competition.
 - iv. We are responsible for each other. The well-being of others in the community is my concern.
 - v. We live with the reality of the human condition. We understand what we can, and cannot do. Life is not a problem to be solved or services to be obtained.

Which tenet intrigues you most and why?

- ❖ In Chapter 3 we discussed the three tenets of Consumerism. What do you notice when you compare them to the tenets of Abundant Communities?
 - ❖ If an abundant community is our goal, taking the five tenets into consideration, how then should we live?
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IDEA

- ❖ Create a Gifts Inventory with members of your group. Ask: What is something you are good at? What is something you know well enough to teach others? What are you interested in? Write responses down, then ask, “With these gifts, what can we do together?”

COMMUNITY ABUNDANCE IN ACTION

- ❖ Competent communities organize around the following three principles:

- i. **They focus on the gifts of its members** – People’s gifts and skills are recognized
- ii. **They nurture associational life** – The gifts and skills of local people are brought into association (they are connected).
- iii. **They offer hospitality** – They welcome the stranger and those on the margins.

Think about these principles in relation to the places we live, are these principles being lived out? If not, what are some ways they can be?

- ❖ Communities that live out these principles exhibit the following:
 - Kindness** - They show love, care, acceptance and respect.
 - Generosity** - Giving to the other within relationships of reciprocity. People give and receive to and from one another.
 - Cooperation** – They interact in ways that are mutually beneficial.
 - Forgiveness** - The willingness to come to terms with having been wounded. This is not an invitation, “... to forget or pretend it did not happen, but to discover that our unwillingness to forgive keeps us imprisoned and unable to either offer our gifts or receive the gifts of those around us who are most problematic.”
 - Fallibility** -The tolerance and acceptance of human limitations.
 - Mystery** - The ability to live unanswered questions and the unknown. “Mystery give us freedom from the burden of answers. Answers are just a restatement of the past.”

Have you experienced any of these capacities in your community? If not, why do you think that is?

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IDEA

- ❖ This study is not an end in itself, rather it is a launch pad to greater connections with others. Have the group discuss ways they would like to remain connected after the study.

AWAKENING THE POWER OF FAMILIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

- ❖ Throughout the book, Peter Block and John McKnight distinguish between the *system way* and the *community way* of life, how would you define the system way? How would you define the community way?
- ❖ In what ways can the community way of life be nurtured?
- ❖ There are three properties that constitute community:
 - Gifts:** Recognizing every capacity of everyone and using them to make a new way.
 - Association:** Voluntarily joining with other families to create that which was better done together.
 - Hospitality:** The welcoming of strangers. They needed strangers to join them, as the strangers brought knowledge and capacities that the host group did not have.

What are some ways you can identify the gifts in your neighbourhood? How can you connect these gifts? Who is the stranger in your neighbourhood and how can you welcome them?

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IDEA

- ❖ If internet is available, visit the sites listed in the Resource section of this book. Use these sites to inspire next steps for your group.

THE POWER OF CONNECTORS

- ❖ Peter Block and John McKnight end their book with a quote from Lois Smidt, it reads: “A great community creates conditions where people can fall in love. It is a place where we can make a fuss about one another. A place where we can ask, ‘How did I ever live without you?’” Based on this definition, do you believe that our communities are “great”? Why or why not?
- ❖ What can we do together that will make our community’s abundance visible, and make our neighbourhood great?