

The Magic of Community

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By George Leonard & Michael Murphy
ITP co-founders



How can we summon up the feeling of community, of oneness with others that made our life? Ancient stones offer testimony on campsites, tools, successful hunts, episodes of violent death. Surviving hunting and gathering bands give clues to a way of living that takes us back to our earliest days. And even now there are moments around the campfire beneath the stars with good friends and good food and drink when that vanished life reappears, immediate in our own consciousness, a life full of talk and laughter, rich in ritual and ceremony, a life of languorous nights and leisurely days interspersed with periods of intense physical challenge and moments of risk and high adventure.

As our knowledge of the distant past deepens, we realize that it was not only building or working that shaped our bodies and brains, for our primitive ancestors had no permanent dwelling places, no jobs. We were also born to art, to music and dance, to a vital feeling for what we now inadequately term the spiritual realm, a consciousness of the variety, immediacy, and beauty of the unseen. Permeating all this was the intricate web of relationships that held us close in the love and nurturance of those we walked with, ate with, slept with. To say “human being” is to invoke community.