

Community

From My Parting Prescription for America

by

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Excerpts:

### Community as the Formula for Fulfillment

... Community is a powerful source of life satisfaction and life expectancy. It's where we know each other, help each other, and find purpose in contributing to each other's lives.

When we find our purpose in contributing to the lives of others, life isn't always easy, but it is immensely gratifying.

### Building Community

What makes community possible? Three core elements: relationships, service, and purpose. And one core virtue: love. Together, they create the ecosystem of meaning and belonging that are essential for fulfillment.

These core pillars of community—relationships, service, and purpose—are powerful drivers of fulfillment.

The triad of fulfillment - relationships, service, and purpose - connects us with something bigger than the individual.

The triad of fulfillment gives us meaning and belonging.

### Relationships

Relationships are the connections we build with friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and others we encounter. Healthy relationships, where we feel seen and where we can be ourselves, can be a powerful source of joy and support and can be buffers to stress. They can

improve our performance at work and school and help us make sense of the world as we process our lives with one another.

Building our relationships with one another requires the commitment to make social connection a priority and the courage to be vulnerable and real with each other. It requires expanding our circle of concern to people who may differ in background and beliefs but who are still part of our community—our neighbors, our coworkers and classmates, the families at our local schools, members of our local faith groups, and the many people in our neighborhoods whose lives and work touch our own.

### Service

Service constitutes the actions we take that benefit others.

This can be regular volunteering for a community organization or school program or participation in National Service Programs. But service can also be small acts of kindness toward someone we know or a stranger. Even though service is defined as benefiting others, it can have profound benefits to the person rendering the service. We have an opportunity to revitalize our culture and practice of service.

### Purpose

Purpose is the feeling of having an overarching life aim that guides and prioritizes our decisions and actions. It's not "what" we do. It's "why" we do it. It's not our goals or achievements, but our reasons for them.

When people have a strong sense of individual purpose anchored in improving other's lives, we invest more in one another and are more committed to each

other; this, in turn, strengthens community.

## Love

### The Core Virtue of Community: Love

When it comes to community, how we approach our relationships, service, and purpose matters. Over half a century ago, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us that we cannot build a healthy community if we are motivated by hatred toward others.

To build community requires love. Love not as sentimentality, but as a commanding force with the power to build, strengthen, and heal. Love as generosity and kindness. Love as hope and grace. Love as courage.

The love required to build community must not be reserved only for close family and friends or those who share our beliefs and life experiences; it must also be extended to neighbors, colleagues, people of different backgrounds, people with whom we disagree, and even people we consider our opponents. It requires recognizing something deeper and more fundamental that connects us.

## Closing

America and the world need a new generation of community builders. A generation defined not by age but by spirit—by a fierce, unyielding commitment to each other and a clear-eyed, full-hearted recognition that we are kin, not enemies and that we fundamentally need each other. We must be that generation. It is up to us to reject the pessimism and animosity of our time and instead choose courage and hope. The choice we make to build community has the power to change lives and transform society.

The core pillars of community—relationships, service, and purpose—are powerful drivers of fulfillment. Let us never forget that good people with hearts full of love can change the world.