Find Your Tribe and Nurture Your Wellbeing

**By Andrea Maehr**

When we speak of tribes, we most often think of communities of indigenous people. Typically, tribal peoples have their own distinct cultures, languages, customs and institutions. Tribes are generally tight-knit groups who commune closely together, support one another and share social interaction.

In our culture, the concept of having a “tribe” is gaining momentum as more people search for a sense of belonging. They desire a place where they can be unconditionally accepted, share common thoughts and ideas, and express themselves authentically. In our technological, highly mobile society, we have increasingly become disconnected from our tribe. Without a tribe, we may wind up feeling distanced, depressed, spiritually disconnected, and may even experience physical illness.

In her book, *Mind Over Medicine,* Dr. Lissa Rankin cites copious scientific data proving [loneliness](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/loneliness) is a greater risk to your health than [smoking](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/smoking) or lack of exercise. Finding your tribe is better for your health than any vitamin, [diet](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/diet), or exercise regimen.

In fact, a Harvard study examining the lives of almost 3,000 people found that those who gather together to go out to dinner, play cards, go on day trips, vacation with friends, go to the movies, attend sporting events, go to church, and engage in other social activities outlive their reclusive peers by an average of two-and-a-half years. Finding your tribe is not only fun. It can also save your life.

For years I searched for my tribe. Moving frequently as a child, I would no sooner find my group then we would move. Each new place meant starting over. I became less and less involved. By the time I was in junior high and on the fourth move, it felt like an exercise in futility to once again find where I belonged.

It wasn’t until I was in my fifties that I finally found my tribe. With these people, I can show up authentically because they love and support me unconditionally. Among them, I can share my most hidden parts and still not be rejected. I am able to be brave and express myself more. Because of the connection to my tribe, my health has improved, and I have greater sense of wellbeing and excitement for life.

If you are longing to find your tribe, here are seven helpful tips to guide you along the way:

* **Do some self-reflection.** The first step in knowing what kind of relationships you want to build is to learn about yourself. Take a look and list some of the things you feel are missing from your life, or that you currently have and really enjoy. Are you drawn to your spiritual practice? Do you love going on hikes? Do you play an instrument and want others to jam with? By developing awareness as to what you are looking for, you’ll be able to search for relationships that will bring you satisfaction.
* **Set clear intentions.** Once you become aware of what it is you are looking for in a tribe, set clear intentions and put it out there! Ask for support from your spiritual source. Being clear and specific about what you want helps you weed out things that may otherwise distract you from finding your authentic tribe.
* **Recognize we are all different, yet the same.**  Sometimes we let our sense of being “different” or “special” get in the way of belonging. Even though each of us is unique and individual, we’re also much more alike than it may first appear. Sometimes our separation story can keep us from what we really want -- belonging. Beyond the ego is that common thread that binds us all together. When we tap that divine spirit, the illusion of separation disappears, and we are left with what we want most – intimate soul-to-soul connection.
* **Try new things and join groups.** Take an art class. Join a women’s or men’s group. Sign up for a workshop. Find a spiritual community that feels authentic and lights you up. Be willing to get out of your comfort zone and try new things. Engage in activities that make your Soul come alive, because when your Soul comes alive, you thrive.
* **Ditch judgment.**  Our own perceptions of the world can sometimes prevent us from connecting with someone who may be the very person you are looking for. Put aside all judgements about how someone looks, what they eat, how they dress, or what their socioeconomic status is. Instead of judging someone, dare to smile and make eye contact.  Look past the surface into the beauty and resonance of that person’s soul.
* **Call in your tribe.** Don’t just sit around and wait for your people to find you. Put your desires out there on social media. Tell family, friends and your healthcare practitioners what you are looking for.
* **Be Brave and Reach Out**. When you meet people who light you up – the ones you hope will become part of your tribe – be brave enough to invite them to get together. Tell them how much you enjoy and admire them. Start your own women’s or men’s group, get together to mastermind your businesses, start a spiritual support group, connect with an email thread or private Facebook group, plan a workshop together, or get together to create something just for fun.

Keep in mind as you grow and change, so may your tribe. Be flexible as you become part of a tribe. Give of yourself and allow others to give to you, as well. Finding your tribe may just be one of the best things you do to nurture your overall health and wellbeing as you go through life.

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