

Make Room for Belonging

A five-minute reflection on the people and places that help us feel at home

A gift from Michael Shoultz and Spirit Rising Coaching

“A place begins to feel like home when we become a little less anonymous to one another.”

Make room for belonging.

Most of us can name places where we have felt at home. Sometimes it was because of the place itself. More often, it was because of the people we encountered there.

Someone remembered our name. Someone noticed when we arrived. Someone invited us into a conversation. Over time, we became a little less anonymous.

Belonging often grows quietly. This reflection is an invitation to notice the people and places that have created that feeling for you - and the ways you may be creating it for someone else.

Before You Begin

Take one slow breath and allow yourself to arrive. Think for a moment about a place where you have felt that you belonged.

Don't try to explain why yet. Simply notice what comes to mind: a place, a face, a conversation, a feeling.

QUESTION ONE

Where have you felt most at home?

It might be the community where you live now, the neighborhood where you grew up, a workplace, a church, an organization, a team, or even a particular gathering place. What made it feel like somewhere you belonged rather than simply somewhere you were?

QUESTION TWO

Who helped you feel known there?

Think about the people who remembered your name, asked about your family, noticed when you were missing, invited you into a conversation, or simply seemed glad to see you. What did they do that made a difference?

QUESTION THREE

Where in your life are you no longer anonymous?

Consider the places you visit regularly. Where do people recognize you? Where do conversations happen naturally? Where have small encounters gradually become relationships? What has grown there that you might not have noticed happening?

QUESTIONFOUR

Who around you might still be trying to find their place?

Think about someone who is new - to your neighborhood, workplace, organization, school community, social circle, or another part of your life. You don't have to know whether they feel excluded. Simply ask: Who might appreciate being noticed?

QUESTIONFIVE

What is one small way you could help someone feel that they belong?

Keep this simple. Learn someone's name. Introduce two people. Invite someone into the conversation. Ask a question and stay long enough to hear the answer. Notice when someone hasn't been around.

A FIVE-MINUTE PRACTICE

The Familiar Face Practice

During the next few days, notice one person you regularly encounter but don't really know.

Do one small thing that makes the encounter less anonymous. Learn their name. Use their name if you already know it. Ask a genuine question. Introduce yourself. Or simply offer the kind of acknowledgment that says: "I recognize you."

Don't try to make the moment significant. Just make a little more room for connection.

We often think belonging is something we find. Perhaps it is also something we create. It grows through names remembered, conversations continued, invitations extended, and the accumulated familiarity of seeing one another again and again.

Eventually, somewhere along the way, a place begins to feel different.

We are no longer simply there. We are known there.

And perhaps one of the quiet gifts of belonging is that eventually we get to offer that feeling to someone else.

— Michael