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WHY TRIBE?

Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.

—HELEN KELLER

“How did you get where you are?” I get asked that question—a lot. “I worked hard and got A LOT of help.” That is my short and not-so-desirable answer to some. But it’s the truth—I would not have gotten here—to this blissful place of loving my career, my people, my life, and myself—without a lot of help from other people and a lot of work. The reason why my answer is great news for you is because that means I didn’t get here by having some sort of special talent or ability that you don’t. You have the same skills to ask and connect that I do—and in case you question any of that, I’m giving you all the answers step by step. It might have taken me a long time to learn that we are not here to walk this journey alone, but once I figured that out, I invited
other people along on my journey and things started changing at warp speed.

Whether you realize it or not, if you have a tribe you most likely have an undisclosed agreement with some of them. It states in invisible ink that if you start to transcend, grow, or change your beliefs you will threaten your sense of belonging and will somehow be punished, made to feel foolish, you will make people feel bad, love may be withheld, and for some of you, extreme measures such as disowning and excommunication could be taken until you remember your place in the tribe and return safely to back to acting predictably and making sure your actions and beliefs fit with theirs. This may then lead you to think you have to “make it on your own” to make it. So you learn to fly solo in all your endeavors, and it’s not easy. In fact, the first month—heck, the first week or day—of embracing a new commitment to a new goal or taking the steps to form a new habit can feel like utter torture when we don’t have other people there for support and celebration. It’s not impossible to go it alone, but unforeseen difficulties begin to arise after so much solo-striving. Negative feelings creep in: isolation, stress, fear of not being loved, unworthiness, exhaustion. We begin to feel misunderstood, anxious, and depressed. We might even be told by our loved ones that we think we are better than them, we are selfish, they are worried about us or that we are no fun anymore. Spend so much time on our own island, and resentment starts to build. Sure this isolated way of getting to your goals can work—you may have even gotten what you came for, but what’s the point if you can’t share the happiness, the money, the promotion, the lives your generous donation changed, the ex-
citement, the body or the bliss with any other soul? Success, even your biggest accomplishment, can feel lonely and exhausting. No wonder even after some wins feelings of confusion and rejection make their way back into your life. In time, it’s easy to question if it’s all worth it.

Why not quit? Just go back to how it was before. That would be easier, right? Return to whatever was half-fueling your happiness tank—the old familiar, safe job and predictable relationships. Fall back on all your temporary fixes—the happy hours, the takeout, the Netflix series, the gossip sessions. Keep the old friends, the mediocre life, and just get by. You were doing it before. Life wasn’t *that* bad. Then again, life wasn’t that *good* either, which is the reason your inner lioness hits you with an internal roaring temper tantrum again, because you’re fed up again, which spurs you to recommit to your goals again, only to find the exact same cycle happening again and again and again. Sound familiar? Welcome to my twenty-year cycle of Monday morning regrets.

So, then *how did I get to where I am now?*

*Tribe*—because you are not meant to make the big leaps alone. Tribe moves you from transition to transcending.

**WHY WOMEN THRIVE WITH TRIBE**

As far back as research allows, you will find that women have been taking care of each other on some level for a very long time. Years and years ago, it was literally a numbers game. The more women together, the more protected they (and their children)
were from the threat of a dangerous animal (or man).\footnote{University of California Los Angeles, “UCLA Researchers Identify Key Behavioral Pattern Used by Women to Manage Stress,” \textit{ScienceDaily}, May 22, 2000, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2000/05/000522082151.htm.} While most studies attribute this response to the surge of hormones that allows the body to stay and fight or leave quickly (fight or flight response), research now suggests that women may have had some other behavioral tricks (responses) up their sleeves that assisted with their stress responses.\footnote{S. E. Taylor, L. C. Klein, B. P. Lewis, et al., “Behavioral Responses to Stress: Tend and Befriend, Not Fight or Flight,” \textit{Psychological Review} 107(3): 41–429.}

There is evidence that the “tribe” component has actually been a part of women for a very long time. One UCLA study suggests that because of the magical combination of female reproductive hormones and oxytocin during a stressful situation, a woman is naturally hard-wired for friendship. The release of oxytocin buffers the fight-or-flight response, and pushes her to regulate her stress levels. In the distant past, this meant taking care of her children or gathering with other women. This leads to the conclusion that when “women become stressed, their inclination is to nurture those around them and reach out to others.”\footnote{Randy Kamen, “A Compelling Argument About Why Women Need Friendships,” \textit{Huffington Post}, November 29, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/randy-kamen-gredinger-edd/female-friendship_b_2193062.html.}


While this is a relatively new study, the above theory may explain why women consistently outlive men. With a natural pre-
disposition to seek the help of other women when they are feeling stressed, it’s no wonder that several other studies are linking social ties to a reduction of risk for disease by lowering blood pressure, heart rate, and cholesterol. “There’s no doubt,” says Dr. Laura Klein, “that friends are helping us live longer.”

“When someone is connected to a group and feels responsibility for other people, that sense of purpose and meaning translates to taking better care of themselves.”

—JULIANNE HOLT-LUNSTAD

We need groups, communities, and circles of friendship, because although you might have found “your person,” no one other person can be everything to another person. In fact, being solely reliant on someone else—husband, wife, partner, lover, confidant, whomever—is not only a big ask, but it puts massive stress on the relationship. It places a dangerously high expectation on both parties, and it’s almost guaranteed that someone is going to be let down, pushed away, or both.

Take for example, your husband. You’re telling him how a coworker has been treating you unfairly. “Who cares?” he says. “Relax, she sounds like an idiot.” You’re a little miffed—he’s supposed to be analyzing her behavior with you, figuring out what you can do or say together. Turns out, your “person” is not your best go-to person here. You’re getting ready for a

big work event and can’t decide between two outfits, so you ask your husband what he thinks of each. “I guess the blue one is nice, but you always look good, babe.” *Is that the kind of answer you wanted to hear?* No, probably not. You wanted your man to dig a little deeper with you—to choose the perfect outfit to say what you want to say with your clothes. Yeah, he’s not your guy for that either. *Why?* Because most men aim to solve problems. They are not wired to hold space, to listen, to give feedback, and to analyze from all angles. No way, they want to solve whatever it is right now, and move on. Most women, however, need time to process, talk it out, and see how they feel. As opposed to men, most women do not react well when they are told what to do without being given time to suss it out.

There is a similar relationship strain if you rely only on your siblings, your children, your parent, your best friend, or your business partner to be your numero uno. Your husband might not be able to choose your perfect outfit, but he knows when you need to get to a yoga mat. Your business partner might not be able to read your moods like your husband can, but she knows you feel good giving presentations in the black jumpsuit. But it’s your best friend who can tell you that you’ll rock it if you wear the quartz crystal necklace she gave you and say your special prayer before you go onstage. We turn to different relationships to serve different needs. Some serve more than others, but the point is no one person is able to completely support another—no matter how much love there is. When we have a tribe we can turn to, we are able to lessen the expectation (and therefore the stress) we put on our other relationships.
TRIBAL FAIL

My first attempt at inviting people into my tribe (but I wasn’t calling it a “tribe” then) was clunky. I felt like the girl everyone stared at, the girl driving around in her beat-up car, covered in bumper stickers, hollering out the window from a megaphone to get the world to join her cause. “I’m looking for friends who only want to talk about deep things, scary things, real things, vulnerable things—basically everything we’re not talking about.” That’s not only an overbearing first-time introduction in most contexts, but it scares people away. It was obvious that I needed help figuring out how to attract the people I needed and wanted into my life without freaking them out or sounding desperate. I had no idea how to create a tribe or where to begin.

I’ve actually gotten quite good at small talk; the trouble is, I don’t like it much. It feels more to me like a juggling of chaotic energies or constantly switching partners at a hoedown rather than a good firm dance hold followed by a mesmerizing waltz. The exquisite rise and fall, underarm turns, and promenades followed by a “thank you” for that beautiful moment we shared and a goodbye when the energy has left the hold and the dance is over. In fact, there are times when small talk, “light and casual conversation about unimportant topics,” as the dictionary defines it, feels so trivial that I feel physical discomfort in my body, and if there is a table of food nearby, it takes all I’ve got to keep myself away from the nom-noms. I always seem to find myself feeding my face so I can numb-numb out and “small talk” less. But because I knew I needed to expand my network, I continued to go places and make dates to connect to new people, but
after these networking events, the casual conversation between strangers, I still found I would leave with a full belly and an empty soul. This only confirmed why I did not go to “these types of things” in the first place. I mean, is it me, or does it get really old feeling like you need a two-drink minimum before you can spend hours talking about things that will never break the surface and actually cause a real connection?

I didn’t want to just take pictures together for social media to show our OOTD (outfit of the day) or that we were at an event we didn’t actually have the best time ever at, or even a real conversation for that matter. I didn’t want to talk only about the weather, their jobs, the restaurant they ate at (although I love a good restaurant so it’s not totally off the table), or what show they were binge watching or how instafamous someone is. “I know, I can’t believe Grey’s Anatomy is still on either . . . I love their vegan cashew kale chips . . . four million followers is amazing . . .” and now I’m back to hitting up the cheese table on the way to the complimentary bar, on the way to the bathroom to be alone and upload my picture of me having the best time ever with people I can’t be myself around. I wanted to know these women. Wasn’t there more to them, to us, to this new moment we were sharing? I wanted to know what their soul was whispering to them late at night and what they’ve been through that has made them who they are and makes them think the way they think. I wanted to know what they unapologetically feel proud of and what they love about themselves or what they want to contribute to the world. I wanted to know if we share the same fears, the same pasts, or even passions. I wanted to know if we could support each other’s dreams! I also wanted them to know
that I was a safe place to share that. But how in the world was I going to get all this across in an evening—and not sound like a nut? “Hi, I’m Lori! I’ll tell you what—these tomato mozzarella skewers sure are good, but do you know what would really hit the spot? A soul stirring conversation and an authentic connection. Tell me, what is your soul screaming at you to do and what can’t you die without doing?” C’mon! I’m not alone in this feeling, am I?

I know what you’re saying—“Lori, don’t we have to start out with small talk to get to know each other?” My answer is yes. Most times we do need it in the beginning, but we’re getting stuck in it. Hoedowns can be really fun and exciting, but they get old if you are never getting the thrill and complexity of sharing the coming together of souls in a waltz. I’m not saying that it’s a good idea to go in for the conversational jugular right away or that all these networking events and small talks are negative, avoidable, or unnecessary; in fact, they can serve a great purpose—however, if this is where you go looking for some fellow soul sisters, you might find yourself in the bathroom uploading pictures, meditating or shoving your face full of canapés. I was looking for something deeper, so I had to find my tribe a different way.

I started going to “self-help” type events hosted by various self-development powerhouses. I fell in love with the tools I was learning and the sense of freedom they were providing in my life. My goal was to learn how to put on events where women could go to find their tribe, learn these tools and create deep connections quickly. I joined a Train The Trainer program and as I was learning how to facilitate trainings with Jack Canfield, I
couldn’t ignore the concept he called masterminding. I had heard of this before but it only just started to resonate as I firsthand heard about how powerful this had been for him and other top transformational and business coaches. If this is what all of these people who are doing what I want to be doing are doing—why am I not doing this? Hello!!! I felt like I had unlocked the secrets of the universe and I was getting a ginormous download that I wasn’t supposed to keep these learnings to myself—I had to start teaching all of the things that were helping me breakthrough.

Eight months later, where every single day I used the tools I teach in this book to get through the gut-wrenching anxiety and fear of public speaking, wondering if I had anything useful to offer, and The Bliss Project (www.TheBlissProject.info) was born: a three-day event filled with lectures, breakout sessions, personal development exercises, yoga classes, and group meditation. Where thousands of women were able to come together in a safe space to dive deep into their fears, get to know their soul’s desires, and move through anything (or past anyone) that was holding them back with the love and support of one another. I wanted the women who attended The Bliss Project to experience all of this freeing self work and personal and professional growth, and my big dream was for them to experience all of it in the company of other soulful women.

Watching the breakthroughs these women were creating for themselves while at my events felt like the reason I was put on this planet. While many of the women reported lasting change afterward, there was still something missing. My surveys I send after the event were telling me they didn’t know how to re-create the feelings of connection and tribe that they had while at The Bliss
Project. They felt isolated, lonely, and found it challenging to follow through on their goals they felt so crystal clear about at the event once they got home. They began to doubt themselves and the journey even though they had felt so confident and certain. I deeply resonated with these answers from my own experience.

What happens when they go back to an environment that doesn’t support these new breakthroughs? Who is going to give them all the support they need throughout this self-work process? More importantly, where can these women turn when they do reach their goal and end up in uncharted waters? Without a support system—chances are, even after the most profound accomplishments, we all go back to our island. Our island, where it’s safe, familiar, sad, and suppressed, where we know exactly what bar has the best happy hour and exactly which bartender will be mixing the Mai Tais, and exactly what friend is ready to validate our sad stories while collecting mini paper umbrellas.

I didn’t want these women to go back to their island. How could I stop them from turning back when the seas of change got a little rough?

Once again, I was being pulled to figure out how to share something that united women in their struggles, wins, and times of growth that would be accessible and implemented easily into their daily lives. It was time to share what I detected as the root of the biggest, most accelerated learnings and miraculous blessings I had ever had in my life. I believe in my core, that just like I was and they were, you are hungry and ready for more . . . What I’m about to share with you could be the turning point that changes everything in your journey if you’re willing to stick to it and do the work. The blessings and growth that unfolded for me after decid-
ing to join a tribe (we were calling it a mastermind back then) with two other women, one I had never met in person I barely knew from Adam, was beyond anything I could have imagined. If I would have known what was coming I would not have believed it.

**TRIBE BENEFITS**

So, you get it, I’m here to help you create a tribe. But what if you’re still like: *Okay, that’s cool and all, but I swear I’ve got this on my own.* Hey, I won’t fight you. In fact, you can still read on chapter-by-chapter and take with you all of the sweet life lessons that I’m here to share; however, I will urge you to heavily consider the following reasons why you will greatly benefit from the deep connection that can only come from a tribe.

**COMFORT:** Your tribe will help make the massive challenges feel relatively insignificant once you are comfortable sharing them within the safe space.

Being part of a tribe means that you can vent, cry, and analyze, and you will get the support you need to help you work with the issue, the outfit, or the crazy coworker at hand. You’ll have accountable sisters who will keep your efforts and energy positive, focused, and *soul-ution*-based. Instead of feeling beaten down, your tribe will remind you of your power, your light, your *why*, and your connection to something that’s bigger than any problem.

**PERSPECTIVE:** Your tribe is abundant access to wisdom in all things practical, professional, soulful, emotional, and spiritual.
The only things we can bring into our life are what we are able to see and experience. When we do this life alone it appears narrow and limited; however, when we create a tribe, we get to live out, experience, and learn the multitude of lessons and teachings that every single woman in the tribe has lived and learned. Allow other sage women, from all different walks of life, to fill you up, because once you open up to receiving all different perspectives and connections, it opens parts of you that were not accessible or flowing and you become like a faucet that won’t turn off.

VULNERABILITY: A tribe will show you the power of sharing and receiving without guilt or fear.

“Thanks for the offer but I’ve got this!” Sound like you? It sure was me. Always a giver, never a receiver. Never one to get vulnerable enough to accept help or admit I needed anything. All this lack of vulnerability did was cause me to resent everyone, because eventually people quit asking if I needed anything (because, I was always all good). In order to have a real connection, both parties (all parties) must not only be vulnerable enough to give wholeheartedly but also to receive wholeheartedly.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Your tribe will hold you to the flame.

We need people who can call us out on our behavior. These are the women who keep you in check when you start believing your negative stories, when you start giving in to your fear, and when you start to justify your own excuses. If you’re playing
small, they will hold up that mirror to show the truth. If you’re complaining or having trouble moving past something, in a loving way your tribe will help guide you to understand what the root of the issue is and what you could do to create a different outcome.

CONFIDENCE: Your tribe will help you move forward even in the face of fear, uncertainty, and judgment.

Most of us need to be pushed out of the plane. It’s easy to say we’re going skydiving. It’s easier to plan and pay for a trip to go skydiving, but how easy is it when it comes time to jump out of the plane? Um, it’s not. It’s terrifying. Welcome to any big decision, making any small shift, arriving at any big goal. But your tribe will gently nudge (or aggressively push if needed) you right out of that tiny plane door into the free fall, reminding you that anything worth doing is tough and it’s scary.

I am everything because of my tribe. When the shame from a failure or fear of the future tries to swallow me whole or tells me it’s not worth it and to close off my heart again, they speak life into me. A tribe says “me too, stay open or get up and try again” and suddenly you’re not alone and the feelings loosen their death grip. Knowing that I have a tribe that has my back has allowed me to take more risks and bigger leaps, because no matter what, I have my people who accept me unconditionally, and I them. And, my friend, when you have that, you are unstoppable.
A Tribe Called Bliss

Break Through Superficial Friendships, Create Real Connections, Reach Your Highest Potential

LORI HARDER

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