

Trust is the basis of true belonging.

Belonging is different from fitting in.

True belonging is where you're able to be your authentic self without fear of lacking, punishment, or criticism. Fitting in is molding yourself to what the group thinks you should be.

True belonging starts with you, and it's difficult especially when, by and far, we're indoctrinated to fit in instead. From our first experience on a playground to our first day on the job, we're constantly immersed in systems and structures that incentivize fitting in.

Fitting in might help us navigate the early stages of connection, but over time, can leave us feeling unseen and disconnected. Ultimately, the cost of fitting in is relinquishing your identity to others. Belonging may be the harder route, but it's the path to deeper human connection and a strong sense of self paved in trust.

You can choose to go about your days looking for confirmation that you don't belong. If you do, you'll surely find it regardless if you're looking in a welcoming environment or a system of oppression.

Systems of oppression are never going to help you feel belonging, as they're designed to make you feel less than, excluded, or forced to give up parts of yourself to fit in, sometimes with your survival on the line.

While it may seem unfair, it's a necessity that you empower yourself to discover your own sense of belonging by choosing a different option.

You can choose to embrace all the edges that make you who you are and decide that you do belong. True belonging is only possible when you embrace that you are enough as you are and choose to trust yourself to be unapologetically you.

Once you find belonging in yourself, you can then choose to trust others to see and accept you as you are.

When you decide to show up with the vulnerability needed to share your true self with the world, you'll inspire others to do the same. By leading by example, you can help create the guardrails that make it increasingly safer for other people to make the same decision.

That is how the gift of choosing to belong can spread exponentially.