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## The Joy in Help

*Gabbie Mock*

Asking for help. Arguably one of the most important questions to know how to ask. The reliance upon others is an innate part of the human credo, whether anyone will admit to it. If this is the case, however, then why does society have such a hard time admitting they need help? In our communities, there are people who are more than willing to drop anything to be at our side. To share their love and respect for you be means of lending a hand. So why are we so against the idea? The answer lies within the obsession of self-sufficiency, independence, and competition. This obsession with being our own person to such a great extent hinders our fulfillment of joy. By leaning on our community in times of need, we greater expand our capacity for joy in our life.

Ross Gay, in *Inciting Joy*, likens this reliance to the symbiotic relationship of the garden. In his third incitement, *We Kin*, Gay describes the tight-knit community of gardeners he is a part of. On page 31, he writes that "...we're just emulating the garden, which is a repository of sharing." The community he has aligned himself with is always there for him, not out of selfish personal gain, but out of respect for the members of their community. "Not because we're saints, but because we're gardeners", he also illustrates on page 30. This respect for one another is an unspoken quality of Gay's community. No one needs to be boastful about their willingness to help, they simply act out of a mutual sense of care and respect. This same idea is echoed in Barbara Herman's article, *Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons*, as she details on page 597, "The duty to develop (not neglect) one's talents and the duty of mutual aid are thus duties of respect for persons." Herman and Gay both agree that the community is there for each other in times of need - with or without asking. Mutual aid is a beautiful aspect of community. This reliance upon others is "The most salient or unifying feature," (Gay, 37). This point speaks volumes to how our society should and wants to behave. We should be more than willing to reach out for help and offer it, because it unites us as a larger community.

It is apparent by the ideas Gay brings up that every living organism is dependent upon another for survival. As he articulates

on page 37, “we the living...cannot survive without help.”. Society should interact with each other like the garden, where plants and insects rely on each other to live everyday. This sense of a harmonious community is vital to the fulfillment of joy. As Martin Mulligan describes on page 347 of his article, *On Ambivalence and Hope in the Restless Search for Community: How to Work with the Idea of Community in the Global Age*, “[Community] Offers people what neither society nor the state can offer, namely a sense of belonging in an insecure world.” This driving force of community is what Gay encourages us to search for. Obtaining a community to belong and thrive, that is unique to you. Having a benevolent community to rely on stretches the scope for compassion and happiness in our lives. Any sort of reluctance towards this reward severs our scope and may limit opportunities for joy.

Evidently, the reliance upon others is an integral principle that our society seems to ignore in an attempt to seem better off. Deep down, we all want to cry out for help in times of need, but our pride muffles the shouts to protect our independence. The competitive nature of humans drives us to be alone in our times of need. Heike Paul of *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* dedicates a whole chapter to the idea of the “self-made man”. He describes “...the notion that individuals can determine their own future and change their own lives for the better... [and] man will be ‘what he makes of himself...’” (Paul, 369). The idea embedded in heads is that you are nothing if you do not create your own success. There is a popular idea that if you cannot make your own success, completely on your own, you have achieved nothing. Asking for help is viewed as weak and pathetic. This popular idea directly contrasts Gay’s findings as he details on page 37, “...you will never be self-sufficient or independent. Because *nothing living is.*” People are what we need to succeed and reach fulfillment in our lives.

Declining to reach out when there are people readily available to help will leave people stagnant and with nowhere to go. Paul concludes in his chapter that, “...the myth of the self-made man is as unrealistic as it is powerful,” (Paul, 407). Ultimately, receiving and giving help will lead to a stronger fulfillment of joy. Herman of *Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons*, writes, “The helpful person is willing to set aside or delay his own pursuits to ease the way for someone else. He views the other as, in a sense, a fellow pursuer of

happiness,” (Herman, 601). So then, if at the end of the day all people want in life is to be happy and have others share that happiness, then this apparent reluctance to help is only getting in the way. Herman also writes, “The helpful person has an interest in the well-being of others,” (Herman, p. 601). A joyous society wants nothing but the best for one another, which means we need to become much more dependent.

A dependent community allows society to thrive, much like how a plentiful garden is the product of the relationships of the organisms within the garden and of those who tend to it. Gay poignantly sums up these ideas by asking the reader on page 39, “...by celebrating kindness - which we do in part by sharing what that kindness has given us, and by all the practices of sharing we can dream up in celebration of what that kindness has given us, what we common beneficiaries of that kindness have been given, which is, isn't it? *everything* - we also might harvest what is planted in that kindness.” Simply put, when there is a community you can depend upon in your life you should utilize their willingness to help and reciprocate that service. It will bring you joy in your life.

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