

## Community building

In his book *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, Peck says that [community](#) has three essential ingredients:

- [Inclusivity](#)
- [Commitment](#)
- [Consensus](#)

Based on his experience with community building workshops, Peck says that community building typically goes through four stages:

- **Pseudocommunity:** This is a stage where the members [pretend](#) to have a *bon homie* with one another, and cover up their differences, by acting as if the differences do not exist. Pseudocommunity can never directly lead to community, and it is the job of the person guiding the community building process to shorten this period as much as possible.
- **Chaos:** When pseudocommunity fails to work, the members start falling upon each other, giving vent to their mutual disagreements and differences. This is a period of [chaos](#). It is a time when the people in the community realize that differences cannot simply be ignored. Chaos looks counterproductive but it is the first [genuine](#) step towards community building.
- **Emptiness:** After chaos comes emptiness. At this stage, the people learn to empty themselves of those [ego](#) related factors that are preventing their entry into community. Emptiness is a tough step because it involves the death of a part of the [individual](#). But, Scott Peck argues, this death paves the way for the birth of a new creature, the **Community**.
- **True community:** Having worked through emptiness, the people in community are in complete empathy with one another. There is a great level of tacit understanding. People are able to relate to each other's feelings. Discussions, even when heated, never get sour, and motives are not questioned.

The four stages of community formation are somewhat related to a [model](#) in [organization theory](#) for the five stages that a team goes through during development. These five stages are:

- *Forming* where the team members have some initial discomfort with each other but nothing comes out in the open. They are [insecure](#) about their role and position with respect to the team. This corresponds to the initial stage of pseudocommunity.
- *Storming* where the team members start arguing heatedly and differences and insecurities come out in the open. This corresponds to the second stage given by Scott Peck, namely chaos.
- *Norming* where the team members lay out rules and guidelines for interaction that help define the roles and responsibilities of each person. This corresponds to emptiness, where the community members think within and empty themselves of their obsessions to be able to accept and listen to others.
- *Performing* where the team finally starts working as a cohesive whole, and effectively achieve the tasks set of themselves. In this stage individuals are aided by the group as a whole where necessary, in order to move further collectively than they could achieve as a group of separated individuals.
- *Transforming* This corresponds to the stage of true community. This represents the stage of celebration, and when individuals leave, as they must, there is a genuine feeling of [grief](#), and a

desire to meet again. Traditionally this stage was often called "Mourning".

It is in this third stage that Peck's community-building methods differ in principle from team development. While teams in business organizations need to develop explicit rules, guidelines and protocols during the *norming* stage, the *emptiness' stage of community building is characterized, not by laying down the rules explicitly, but by shedding the resistance within the minds of the individuals.*

Peck started the Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) to promote the formation of communities, which, he argues, are a first step towards uniting humanity and saving us from self destruction.

The Blue Heron Farm [3] is an [intentional community](#) in central [North Carolina](#) whose founders stated that they were inspired by Peck's writings on community, although Peck himself had no involvement with this project.

### [\[edit\]](#) **The meaning of true community**

Peck describes what he considers to be the most salient characteristics of a true community.

- **Inclusivity, commitment and consensus:** Members accept and embrace each other, celebrating their individuality and transcending their differences. They commit themselves to the effort and the people involved. They make decisions and reconcile their differences through consensus.
- **Realism:** Members bring together multiple perspectives to better understand the whole context of the situation. Decisions are more well-rounded and humble, rather than one-sided and arrogant.
- **Contemplation:** Members examine themselves. They are individually and collectively self-aware of the world outside themselves, the world inside themselves, and the relationship between the two.
- **A safe place:** Members allow others to share their vulnerability, heal themselves, and express who they truly are.
- **A laboratory for personal disarmament:** Members experientially discover the rules for peacemaking and embrace its virtues. They feel and express [compassion](#) and respect for each other as fellow human beings.
- **A group that can fight gracefully:** Members resolve conflicts with wisdom and grace. They listen and understand, respect each others' gifts, accept each others' limitations, celebrate their differences, bind each others' wounds, and commit to a struggle together rather than against each other.
- **A group of all leaders:** Members harness the "flow of leadership" to make decisions and set a course of action. It is the spirit of community itself that leads and not any single individual.
- **A spirit:** The true spirit of community is the spirit of [peace](#), love, [wisdom](#) and power. Members may view the source of this spirit as an outgrowth of the collective self or as the manifestation of a Higher Will.