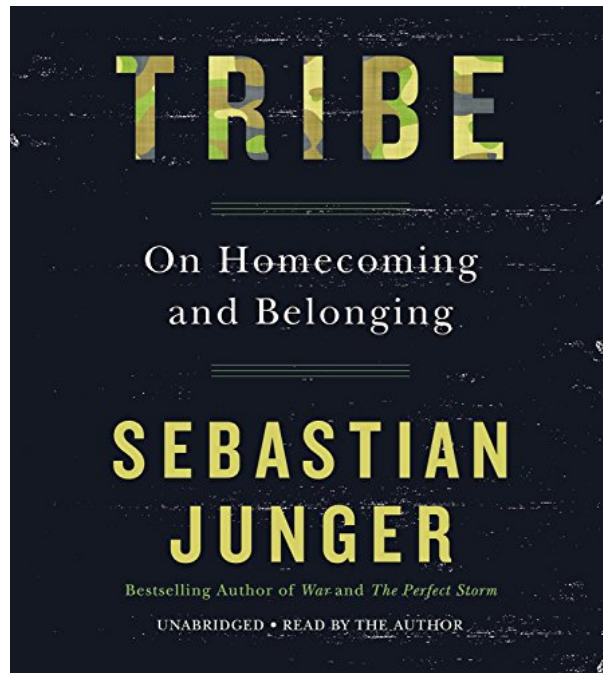
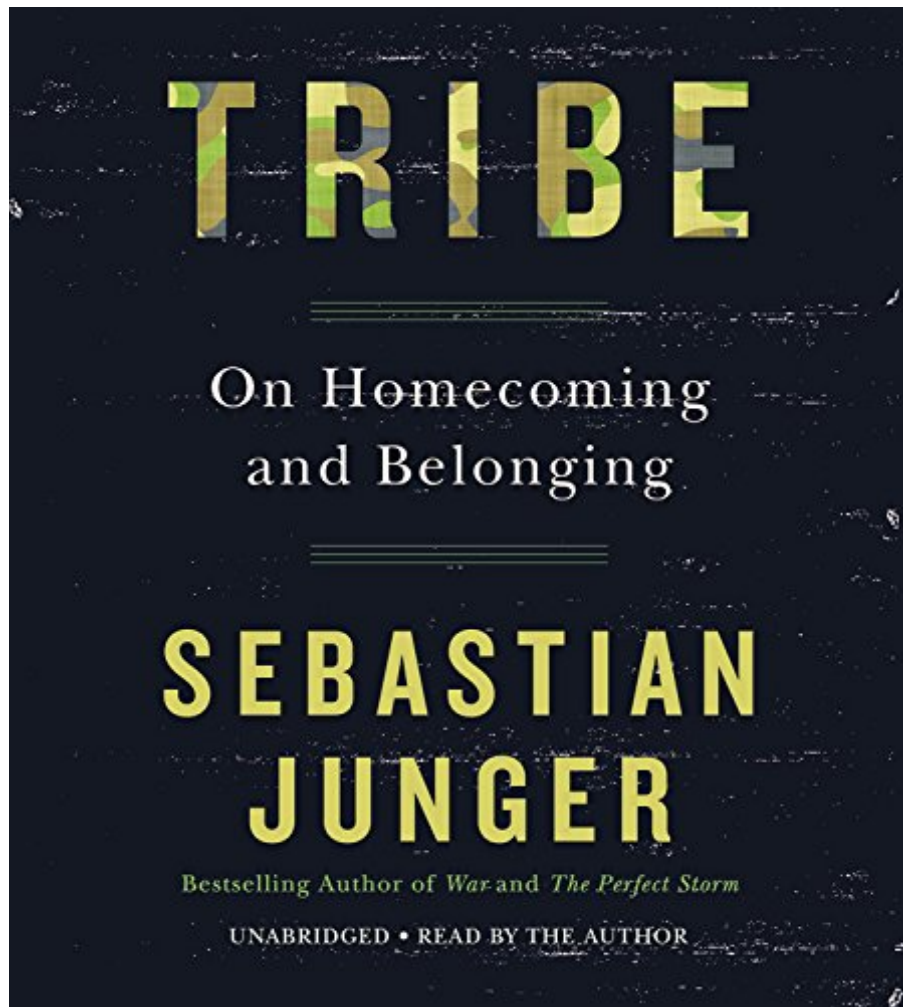


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We have a strong instinct to belong to small groups defined by clear purpose and understanding--"tribes." This tribal connection has been largely lost in modern society, but regaining it may be the key to our psychological survival. Decades before the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin lamented that English settlers were constantly fleeing over to the Indians-but Indians almost never did the same. Tribal society has been exerting an almost gravitational pull on Westerners for hundreds of years, and the reason lies deep in our evolutionary past as a communal species. The most recent example of that attraction is combat veterans who come home to find themselves missing the incredibly intimate bonds of platoon life. The loss of closeness that comes at the end of deployment may explain the high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered by military veterans today. Combining history, psychology, and anthropology, TRIBE explores what we can learn from tribal societies about loyalty, belonging, and the eternal human quest for meaning. It explains the irony that-for many veterans as well as civilians-war feels better than peace, adversity can turn out to be a blessing, and disasters are sometimes remembered more fondly than weddings or tropical vacations. TRIBE explains why we are stronger when we come together, and how that can be achieved even in today's divided world.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

218 of 230 people found the following review helpful.

Unique exploration of one of most important cultural realities of the 21st century

By Englewood Review of Books

I'll be frank. I've not been a big fan of Junger's previous books, but in this book he puts his finger on one of the most important cultural realities of the twenty-first century, the loss of tight-knit communities. Certainly, Robert Putnam (in his important book *BOWLING ALONE*) and others have documented similar realities, but Junger's work stands out for two reasons: 1) it is immensely accessible and 2) he arrives at this conclusion from a unique perspective, that of his observation of the military experience. One of his central themes is the idea that soldiers in combat situations have such an intense experience of interdependency, solidarity and community that they often struggle upon returning to civilian life in the US, in which there rarely is any similar sort of community to which they can belong.

*TRIBE* is well-worth reading for pointed socio-political questions it asks about American civic life and for the keen observations it makes about the combat experience. Thankfully, Junger doesn't offer any easy fixes, but on the other hand, he doesn't do much to stir our imaginations about how to cultivate in American civilian life the sort of solidarity that combat engenders. At times, he does tend toward idealizing the Native American experience of tribal life, and that sort of idealism won't be particularly helpful for addressing the dissolution of community that we so intensely experience. Regardless, this is a timely book that should not only widely read, but also widely discussed.

49 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

We're All Dead Inside

By Phil

Upon reading Junger's article in a recent *Vanity Fair* article on the affects of PTSD (it's not exclusive to just war veterans, by the way), I was under the assumption that a large portion of this book would be dedicated to that. I was wrong. Sebastian dove much deeper than that.

*Tribe* focuses on the growing disconnect we're experiencing with one another as a society, and the far reaching consequences of that disconnect. It's an eye-opening letter to the American public that politely reminds us that we've lost our way when it comes to being a closer knit community as a whole.

Not always, of course. In his book, he touches on how tragedies such as 9/11 brings us closer - albeit briefly. But once the dust settles, we fall back to our old ways.

This is not a book about war, the military, or PTSD. It's about the loss of belonging, caring for our fellow man as we do about the ones closest to us. He uses a parable about a brief encounter he has with a homeless man as a young adult. The man sees that he's on a backpacking trip on his own and asks if he has enough food for his trip. The young Junger, afraid of being mugged for his supplies, lies and tells the man that he has



just a little food to last him. The homeless man tells Junger he'll never make it on what he has and hands him his lunch bag that he more than likely received from a homeless shelter - probably the only meal the homeless man would have the entire day. Sebastian feels horrible about himself after that, but uses that lesson as a parable for Tribe.

Think of your fellow man before thinking of yourself. Because without that sense of humanism, togetherness, belonging, we're all dead inside.

102 of 111 people found the following review helpful.

A dazzling short masterpiece—gloriously readable and guaranteed to change your life!

By Denny Hatch

“We have met the enemy and he is us.”

—Pogo, by Walt Kelly (1912-1973)

Sebastian Junger's central theme is the epidemic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) suffered by returning American war fighters that is exponentially higher than any previous conflict in world history.

The root cause, according to Sebastian Junger, is not war, violence, death and destruction overseas. It is not the VA back home. It is us.

Junger opens with a brilliant narrative—footnote free and wonderfully informative—of how primitive tribes, societies and communes through history waged wars and successfully dealt with the aftermath.

Then he cuts to the chase. A quick sampling:

“The vast majority of traumatized vets are not faking their symptoms, however. They return from wars that are safer than those their fathers and grandfathers fought, and yet far greater numbers of them wind up alienated and depressed. This is true even for people who didn't experience combat. In other words, the problem doesn't seem to be the trauma on the battlefield so much as reentry into society.”

“Today's veterans often come home to find that although they're willing to die for their country, they're not sure how to live for it. It's hard to know how to live for a country that regularly tears itself apart along every possible ethnic and demographic boundary. The income gap between rich and poor continues to widen, many people live in racially segregated communities, the elderly are mostly sequestered from public life, and rampage shootings happen so regularly that they only remain in the news cycle for a day or two. To make matters worse, politicians occasionally accuse rivals of deliberately trying to harm their own country—a charge so destructive to group unity that most past societies would probably have just punished it as a form of treason. It's complete madness, and the veterans know this.”

Before casting a vote November 8, 2016, I urge you to read *TRIBE: On Homecoming and Belonging*. And give it as a gift to everyone you care about.

Denny Hatch

dennyhatch@yahoo.com

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