

“We have an immense desire for meaning and to belong. Whether this takes the form of myth, languages or rights, it’s these ritualised experiences that not only facilitate a feeling of belonging, but a sense of meaning.”

Dr Stephanie Baker,
Lecturer City University London

“If you all come into work tomorrow and none of you has seen the same thing, the conversation quickly breaks down... you need that social glue. Without commonality you can no longer meaningfully communicate with people.”

Dr Tom Chatfield,
Technology Theorist and Philosopher

Primal Need

So, let’s go right back to basics. What makes us tick? To start answering this, we’ll focus on the human condition. By exploring the primal needs that have evolved over centuries, we can shed some light on this age old question.

We are naturally a **WE**, not **I**, species. We love belonging to a tribe. Think of a pod of dolphins vs the lone wolf. A herd of elephants vs the solo polar bear.

As humans, we’re constantly balancing personal with social needs. If we fail to meet our personal needs, it can lead to a loss of autonomy or personal freedom. However, failure to meet our social group needs is a lot more dramatic - loneliness, a sense of isolation and, if pushed to the very extreme, the breakdown of human civilisation as we know it. So, no pressure then...

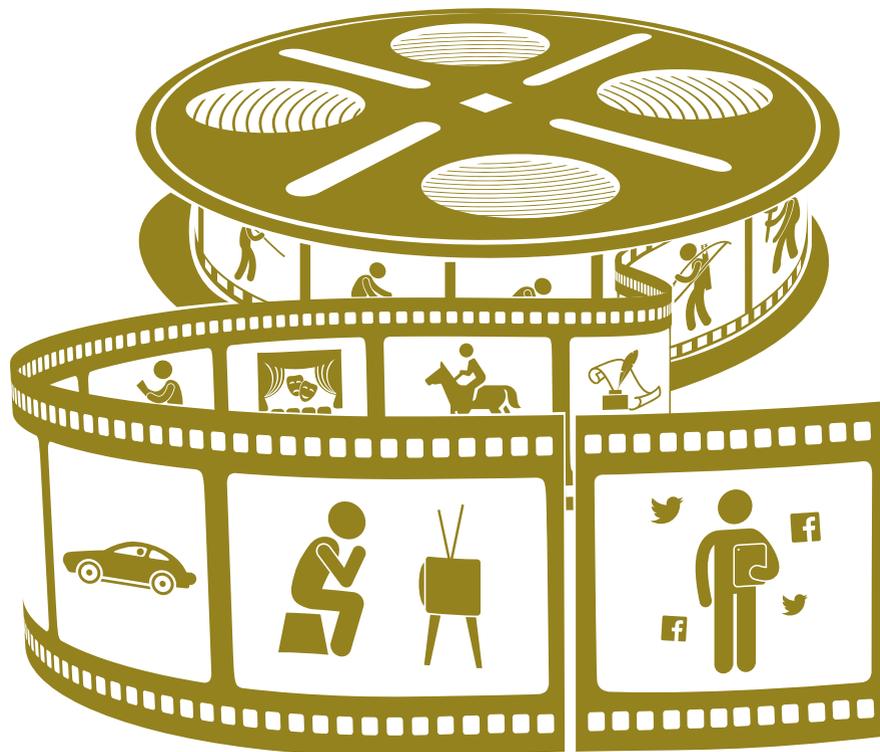
By creating a sense of belonging, we create meaning for ourselves. It influences our capacity to communicate and be understood. In short, the more connected we feel to each other, the happier we are.

And the way we connect is via a shared culture - experiences and emotions, beliefs and practices. These form a common narrative which acts as a social glue, binding us all together.

We are naturally tribal. We value a shared culture which bonds us together as a family; bonds friends together and bonds the nation together. This has evolved over centuries.



The Evolution of Modern Humankind



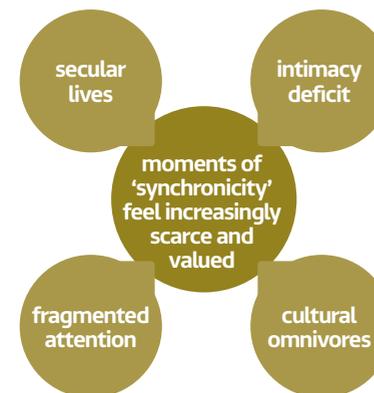
Digital technology vs primal needs...

Innovations in digital technology have changed the way we live - they've empowered us. They've enabled us to take selfies on the top of Mount Everest, Google hangout from space or receive an Amazon delivery via drone. Exciting stuff, sure. But exciting as these are, they can't provide us with the real, physical **human** interactions that are essential to our happiness and wellbeing; that we need as much as food and water.

If you compare modern humankind's time on earth to a 60 minute film reel, the digital age has only been around for about 6 frames - that's less than a second of film. Or, put a different way, 0.01% of our time has been impacted by the digital age. So while the furious rate of tech development is impressive, digital interactions can never rival real ones. Just watch the film "Her" if you don't believe us.

Nonetheless, the ways in which we come together to share and connect ARE changing:

Cultural forces are making us feel increasingly alienated from family, friends & the nation



Our shared beliefs are reducing in an increasingly secular society

- big national events like the Jubilee or the Olympics are so popular because they give us a renewed sense of belonging.

Our shared spaces are adapting

- as the traditional 2.4 children family declines and we see more and more single person households, we've reacted in family homes by pulling down walls physically - creating open plan spaces which bring us together again. Not coincidentally, we've seen a rise in mass shared events like community projects and festivals, which bring us together physically.

Our attention is fragmenting

- we're expected to cram more into every minute, hour, day than ever before. Things feel more instant, more fleeting and more disposable. So we search out anchors or experiences which we can invest time and meaning in - things that have staying power and actually add value to our lives.

We're becoming cultural omnivores

- as we attempt to curate our own personal cultural understanding, we are pressurised to constantly stay on top of new ideas and stay ahead of the trend curve. But we lose the sense that many others are also taking part or experiencing the same stuff as us, as there is so much pressure on being an *individual*.

3 key components are needed for bonding to occur



collective

Gathering People Together



A shared reference point which a particular group can understand and wants to engage with. Provides shared belief.



involved

Bringing People Together Emotionally



An experience which requires you to be present and engaged. Ensures shared emotion.



transcendent

Giving People an Enduring Experience



An experience that lives beyond the moment itself. Connecting beyond themselves.

There's no point arguing with science! So, despite the disruptive nature of modern life, we've realised that humans will always have that innate urge to bond. Our Primal Screen research has identified three key components that symbolise when bonding moments are taking place:

Collective

This is something which we naturally gravitate towards for company, like the pub. It gathers us together as a group – as family, friends or individuals – in a physical shared space and it gives us something in common, too.

Involved

An experience that brings us physically into the moment. Bells command our attention and have always done so – whether it's a church bell, a school bell or a servants' bell – they all act as a tribal call to gather, bringing everyone's attention into the present whenever we hear them.

Transcendent

This is something we care about enough for it to live beyond the moment it occurs. We connect with an experience that's bigger than the moment itself. It's something we carry with us and something which survives the passage of time – like a pocket watch.

Bonding happens when these three components are present.

TV provides a common point of reference – live TV in particular does this in a way that no other media has yet managed to do. It acts as a stimulus for social interaction and a basis for social relationships.

TV gives us confidence that others will know what we're talking about.

— “We don't need help with tapping into a niche. We do that 24/7 and can find our communities of like-minded people easily, but we do need help with being part of the mass experience.”

Dr Tom Chatfield, Technology Theorist and Philosopher



